The Hudson Review

EDITORS: *Joseph Bennett, Frederick Morgan*
ENGLISH EDITOR: *William Arrowsmith*
MANAGING EDITOR: *Ellen St. Sure*

VOLUME IV, NUMBER 2 SUMMER 1951

Othello: An Essay to Illustrate a Method — KENNETH BURKE 165
Three Poems — ROBERT GRAVES 204
The Birth of a Film — SERGEI EISENSTEIN 208
Address by Gooley MacDowell to the Hasbeens Club of Chicago — SAUL BELLOW 222
Translations from Leconte de Lisle — RICHMOND LATTIMORE, FREDERICK MORGAN 228
A Note on Leconte de Lisle — RICHMOND LATTIMORE 236
Four Hours to Rome (*story*) — MONROE ENGEL 238
Romanticism and Reality in Robert Penn Warren — JOSEPH FRANK 248
Jung at Mid-Century — HERBERT READ 259
Cézanne and Redon — RACHEL FRANK 269
Theatre Chronicle — FREDERICK MORGAN 275
Little Magazines in Paris — THOMAS BARBOUR 278

Reviews:
The Fire-Bird's Tail Feathers — SIDNEY MONAS 284
Pound and the Lyric — R. W. FLINT 293
Fitzgerald's Way — R. W. B. LEWIS 304
An Heir and His Inheritance — ROBERT FITZGERALD 309
Directives for Salvation — DANIEL AARON 314

THE HUDSON REVIEW is published quarterly by The Hudson Review, Inc., 439 West Street, New York 14, N. Y. Subscriptions $3 per year; Canada, $3.50; foreign, $4. Single copy, $1; in Canada, $1.15. U. S. distributor: The Eastern News Co., 200 East 67th St., New York 21, N. Y. New York City distributor: B. de Boer, P. O. Box 761, Hoboken, N. J. Business and subscriptions in England: B. H. Blackwell, Ltd., The Broad Street, Oxford. Rates in England: Subscriptions 25/ per year; single copy 7/6d. Manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes. Copyright 1951 by The Hudson Review, Inc. Registered U. S. Patent Office. Entered as second-class matter June 25, 1948 at the Post Office at New York, New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Reprinted 1963
By Permission
Of The Original Publisher

AMS REPRINT COMPANY
New York 3, N. Y.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

KENNETH BURKE

Othello

An Essay to Illustrate a Method

OTHELLO. *Will you, I pray, demand that demi-devil*
Why he hath thus ensnared my soul and body?

IAGO. *Demand me nothing: what you know, you know:*
From this time forth I never will speak word.

LODOVICO. *What! not to pray?*

GRATIANO. *Torments will ope your lips.*

I

Iago as Katharma

OTHELLO: ACT V, SCENE II. Desdemona, fated creature, marked for a tragic end by her very name (Desdemona: "moan-death") lies smothered. Othello, just after the words cited as our motto, has stabbed himself and fallen across her body. (Pattern of Othello's farewell speech: How he spoke of a "base Indian", and we knew by that allusion he meant Othello. When it was told that he "threw a pearl away", for "threw away" we substituted "strangled", and for the pearl, "Desdemona". Hearing one way, we interpreted another. While he was ostensibly telling of a new thing, thus roundabout he induced us to sum up the entire meaning of the story. Who then was the "turban'd Turk" that Othello seized by the throat and smote? By God, it was himself —our retrospective translation thus suddenly blazing into a new present identity, a new act here and now, right before our eyes, as he stabs himself.) Iago, "Spartan dog,/More fell than anguish, hunger, or the sea", is invited by Lodovico to "look on the tragic loading of this bed." *Exeunt omnes,* with Iago as prisoner, we being assured that they will see to "the censure of this hellish

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

villain,/The time, the place, the torture." Thus like the tragic bed, himself bending beneath a load, he is universally hated for his ministrations. And in all fairness, as *advocatus diaboli* we would speak for him, in considering the cathartic nature of his role.

Reviewing, first, the definition of some Greek words central to the ritual of cure:

Katharma: that which is thrown away in cleansing; the off-scourings, refuse, of a sacrifice; hence, worthless fellow. "It was the custom at Athens," lexicographers inform us, "to reserve certain worthless persons, who in case of plague, famine, or other visitations from heaven, were thrown into the sea," with an appropriate formula, "in the belief that they would cleanse away or wipe off the guilt of the nation." And these were *katharmata.* Of the same root, of course, are our words *cathartic* and *catharsis,* terms originally related to both physical and ritual purgation.

A synonym for *katharma* was *pharmakos:* poisoner, sorcerer, magician; one who is sacrificed or executed as an atonement or purification for others; a scapegoat. It is related to *pharmakon:* drug, remedy, medicine, enchanted potion, philtre, charm, spell, incantation, enchantment, poison.

Hence, with these terms in mind, we note that Iago has done this play some service. Othello's suspicions, we shall aim to show, arise from within, in the sense that they are integral to the motive he stands for; but the playwright cuts through that tangle at one stroke, by making Iago a voice at Othello's ear.

What arises within, if it wells up strongly and presses for long, will seem imposed from without. One into whose mind melodies spontaneously pop, must eventually "hear voices". "Makers" become but "instruments", their acts a sufferance. Hence, "inspiration", "afflatus", "angels", and "the devil". Thus, the very extremity of inwardness in the motives of Iago can make it seem an outwardness. Hence we are readily disposed to accept the dramatist's dissociation. Yet villain and hero here are but essentially inseparable parts of the one fascination.

Add Desdemona to the inseparable integer. That is: add the privacy of Desdemona's treasure, as vicariously owned by Othello in manly miserliness (Iago represents the threat implicit in such cherishing), and you have a tragic trinity of ownership in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

profoundest sense of ownership, the property in human affections, as fetishistically localized in the object of possession, while the possessor is himself possessed by his very engrossment (Iago being the result, the apprehension that attains its dramatic culmination in the thought of an agent acting to provoke the apprehension). The single mine-own-ness is thus dramatically split into the three principles of possession, possessor, and estrangement (threat of loss). Hence, trust and distrust, though *living in* each other, can be shown *wrestling with* each other. *La propriété, c'est le vol.* Property fears theft because it is theft.

Sweet thievery, but thievery nonetheless. Appropriately, the first outcry in this play was of "Thieves, thieves, thieves!" when Iago stirred up Desdemona's father by shouting: "Look to your house, your daughter, and your bags!/Thieves! thieves!"—first things in a play being as telltale as last things. Next the robbery was spiritualized: "You have lost your soul." And finally it was reduced to imagery both lewd and invidious: "An old black ram is tupping your white ewe," invidious because of the social discrimination involved in the Moor's blackness. So we have the necessary ingredients, beginning from what Desdemona's father, Brabantio, called "the property of youth and maidenhood." (Nor are the connotations of *pharmakon,* as evil-working drug, absent from the total recipe, since Brabantio keeps circling about this theme, to explain how the lover robbed the father of his property in the daughter. So it is there, in the offing, as imagery, even though rationalistically disclaimed; and at one point, Othello does think of poisoning Desdemona.)

Desdemona's role, as one of the persons in this triune tension (or "psychosis"), might also be illuminated by antithesis. In the article on the Fine Arts (in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*), the elements of pleasure "which are not disinterested" are said to be:

> the elements of personal exultation and self-congratulation, the pride of exclusive possession or acceptance, all these emotions, in short, which are summed up in the lover's triumphant monosyllable, "Mine."

Hence it follows that, for Othello, the beautiful Desdemona was not an aesthetic object. The thought gives us a radical glimpse into the complexity of her relation to the audience (her

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nature as a rhetorical "topic"). First, we note how, with the increased cultural and economic importance of private property, an aesthetic might arise antithetically to such norms, exemplifying them in reverse, by an idea of artistic enjoyment that would wholly transcend "mine-own-ness". The sharper the stress upon the *meum* in the practical realm, the greater the invitation to its denial in an aesthetic *nostrum*.

We are here considering the primary paradox of dialectic, stated as a maxim in the formula beloved by dialectician Coleridge: "Extremes meet." Note how, in this instance, such meeting of the extremes adds to our engrossment in the drama. For us, Desdemona *is* an aesthetic object: we never forget that we have no legal rights in her, and we never forget that she is but an "imitation". But *what* is she imitating? She is "imitating" her third of the total tension (the disequilibrium of monogamistic love, considered as a topic). She is imitating a major perturbation of property, as so conceived. In this sense, however aloof from her the audience may be in discounting her nature as a mere playwright's invention, her role can have a full effect upon them only insofar as it draws upon firm beliefs and dark apprehensions that not only move the audience *within* the conditions of the play, but prevail as an unstable and disturbing cluster of motives *outside* the play, or "prior to" it. Here the "aesthetic," even in negating or transcending "mine-own-ness," would draw upon it for purposes of poetic persuasion. We have such appeal in mind when speaking of the "topical" element. You can get the point by asking yourself: "So far as catharsis and wonder are concerned, what is gained by the fact that the play imitates *this particular tension* rather than some other?"[1]

---

[1]It will become clear, as we proceed, that we by no means confine our analysis of appeal to such "topical" consideration. But "topics", as discussed in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, mark one of the points where the work, over and above the appeal of its internal relations, appeals by reference to "non-aesthetic" factors. The "allusive" nature of the work need have no literal bearing at all. That is, it would be "allusive", and correctly allusive, in the sense we have in mind, even though you could prove that in all the history of Western culture no single "Blackamoor" ever arose to such office as Othello's, married a white woman, and as the result of jealous misunderstandings, strangled her.

Longinus' *On the Sublime* offers us the bridge we want, for getting from the recognized use of topics in Rhetoric to their possible unrecognized presence in Poetry. For on many occasions he cites instances of oratory, but treats them as instances of poetry.

Critics systematically recognized that orators employed "topics" to "move" audiences in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In sum, Desdemona, Othello, and Iago are all partners of a single conspiracy. There were the enclosure acts, whereby the common lands were made private; here is the analogue, in the realm of human affinity, an act of spiritual enclosure. And might the final choking be also the ritually displaced effort to close a thoroughfare, as our hero fears lest this virgin soil that he had opened up become a settlement? Love, universal love, having been made private, must henceforth be shared vicariously, as all weep for Othello's loss, which is, roundabout, their own. And Iago is a function of the following embarrassment: Once such privacy has been made the norm, its denial can be but promiscuity. Hence his ruttish imagery, in which he signalizes one aspect of a total fascination.

So there is a whispering. There is something vaguely feared and hated. In itself it is hard to locate, being woven into the very nature of "consciousness"; but by the artifice of Iago it is made local. The tinge of malice vaguely diffused through the texture of events and relationships can here be condensed into a single principle, a devil, giving the audience as it were flesh to sink their claw-thoughts in. Where there is a gloom hanging over, a destiny, each man would conceive of the obstacle in terms of the instruments he already has for removing obstacles, so that a soldier would shoot the danger, a butcher thinks it could be chopped, and a merchant hopes to get rid of it by trading. But in Iago the menace is generalized. (As were you to see man-made law as destiny, and see destiny as a hag, cackling over a brew, causing you by a spell to wither.)

In sum, we have noted two major cathartic functions in Iago: (1) as regards the tension centering particularly in sexual love

---

the practical meaning of the word "move" (inducing them to make practical decisions, etc.). But when they came to the analysis of poetry (with its purely aesthetic way of being "moving"), instead of reference to "topics" they shifted the stress to "imagery". (Longinus himself is a good instance of this change, as his treatise, in contrast with the low rating placed on imagination in classical works generally, assigns to images and imagination the high place they attain in nineteenth-century idealism and romanticism.)

"Images," however, are but one aspect of "topics". And the shift of terms conceals a continuity of function. Or, otherwise put: if the topic is said to figure in the appeal when a given line of *oratory* is being analyzed, what happens to such appeal when this same line is appreciated purely as poetry? Does the *topical* appeal drop out of the case entirely? Or are such considerations retained, but in disguise, as critics focus the attention upon "imagery," with its varying capacity for inducing moods or forming attitudes?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as property and ennoblement (monogamistic love), since in reviling Iago the audience can forget that his transgressions are theirs; (2) as regards the need of finding a viable localization for uneasiness (*Angst*) in general, whether shaped by superhuman forces or by human forces interpreted as super-human (the scapegoat here being but a highly generalized form of the over-investment that men may make in specialization). Ideally, in childhood, hating and tearing-at are one; in a directness and simplicity of hatred there may be a ritual cure for the bewilderments of complexity; and Iago may thus serve to give a feeling of integrity.

These functions merge into another, purely technical. For had Iago been one bit less rotten and unsleeping in his proddings, how could this play have been kept going, and at such a pitch? Until very near the end, when things can seem to move "of themselves" as the author need but actualize the potentialities already massed, Iago has goaded (tortured) the plot forward step by step, for the audience's villainous entertainment and filthy purgation. But his function as impresario takes us into matters that must be considered rather in terms of internal development.

II

Ideal Paradigm

As regards internal relations, let us propose the following ideal paradigm for a Shakespearean tragedy:

Act I: Setting the situation, pointing the arrows, with first unmistakable guidance of the audience's attitude towards the *dramatis personae,* and with similar setting of expectations as regards plot. Thus we learn of Cassio's preferment over Iago, of Iago's vengeful plan to trick Othello ("I follow him to serve my turn upon him. . . . But I will wear my heart upon my sleeve/ For daws to peck at: I am not what I am.") Also we learn of Desdemona as the likely instrument or object of the deception. Usually, in this act, various strands that are later to be interwoven are introduced in succession, with minimum relation to one another, though an essential connection is felt: for instance, the incidents in the Council Chamber of Scene III will set up, in Othello's departure for battle, such conditions as, the audience

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

already realizes, are suited to Iago's purposes (the situation thus implicitly containing his act).

Act II: Perhaps the most nearly "novelistic" act of a Shakespearean play? While events are developing towards the peripety, the audience is also allowed to become better acquainted with a secondary character much needed for the action. "Humanization", even possibly character-drawing for its own sake, as the second act of *Hamlet* might be entitled "Polonius" (the five being: "The Ghost", "Polonius", "The Play-within-a-Play", "Ophelia Pitiful", and "The Duel"). If Act I of *Othello* could be called "Iago Plans Vengeance", Act II would be "Cassio", or better, "Cassio Drunk", since his use in sharpening our understanding of all the relationships must also be eventful in itself, as well as performing some function that will serve as a potential, leading into the third act.

Or might the best way to approach the second act be to treat it as analogous to the introduction of the second theme in the classical sonata-form? Perhaps the most revealing example of the second act, thus considered, is in Corneille's *Cinna.* In the first act we have seen Cinna plotting against the life of the Emperor (Auguste). The woman whom he loves has demanded that he lead this conspiracy. The Emperor had mistreated her father, and she would have vengeance, though the Emperor has sought to make amends by being kind and generous to her personally. Hence, her lover, to prove himself "worthy" of her (what could a Cornelian tragedy do without that word, *digne!*) must conspire against the Emperor, with whom he stands in good favor. He plans the assassination for love. When officiating at a public sacrifice, he will make the Emperor the victim instead. Just before the first act ends, one of the conspirators enters with the news that Cinna and the other main conspirator, Maxime, have been summoned by the Emperor. The act ends on general consternation among the conspirators. They fear that their plot has been discovered.

In Act II, however, the plot is moved forward by a startling development. Auguste, who has not appeared in the first act at all, now confides to Cinna and Maxime that he is weary of rule. He would lay down his office, turning it over to Cinna and Maxime. (And to complete the irony of the situation, he also

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

talks of plans for having Cinna marry Emilie, the very woman for whose love Cinna has vowed to slay him.) He "aspires to descend" (*aspire à descendre*), a good variant of the "mounting" theme which we always watch incidentally in our search for motives. Thus, one editor quotes Louis Racine, in his *Mémoires:* " 'Note well that expression,' my father said with enthusiasm to my brother. 'One says *aspire to rise* (*aspirer à monter*); but you must know the human heart as well as Corneille did, to be able to say of an ambitious man that he aspires to descend.' "

The Emperor's unexpected decision, in all simplicity and affection, to make the conspirators rulers in his stead, is a *second theme* of the most startling sort. As contrasted with the expectations established at the end of Act I (the conspirators' fears that their conspiracy had been discovered), this development is so abrupt as almost to be a peripety. And the situation is so set up that, whereas Cinna and Maxime had, heretofore, been united despite a divergency of motives, they are now put at odds. Maxime would now abandon the conspiracy; but Cinna would carry it through regardless, since it is the price of his marriage to vengeance-minded Emilie.

In this kind of drama, almost each scene discloses something that jerks the characters into a new relationship (somewhat as, with the slow turning of a kaleidoscope, there is a succession of abrupt changes, each time the particles fall suddenly into a new design). But the change from the conspiracy theme of the first act to the abdication theme of the second is so exceptionally marked that it illustrates our point about the second theme even to excess.

Incidentally, as regards Shakespearean forms generally, we suppose that the relation between "second theme" and "double plot" should best be studied along the lines of Mr. Francis Fergusson's speculations about "analogy" in drama, in his recently published *Idea of a Theater.*

Act III: The peripety. In Act II, after Cassio had been established unmistakably as chivalrous in the extreme towards Desdemona, Iago had promised us in an aside: "He takes her by the palm; ay, well said, whisper; with as little a web as this I will ensnare as great a fly as Cassio. Ay, smile upon her, do; I will gyve thee in thine own courtship." Accordingly, we might call

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Act III "The Trap Is Laid." Or perhaps, "The Mock Disclosure", since here Iago causes Othello to see with his own eyes things that are not—and with this diabolic epiphany the play rises to a new level of engrossment.

Iago's manipulations of Othello's mind are like the catechizing of him in a black mass, as the pace of the play increases through their raging stichomythia; and in the handkerchief the solemn enunciation of the false doctrine has its corresponding revelation of the "sacred object."

Note, incidentally, how cautiously the dramatist has released the incidents of his story. Before Iago works on Othello as regards Desdemona, we have seen him duping Cassio, then Montano, and even to some extent his confederate Roderigo; also we have seen him moulding Othello's misjudgment of Cassio; and only then do the direct attacks upon Othello's confidence in Desdemona begin. Thus, through seeing Iago at work, the audience has been led carefully, step by step, to believe in the extent of his sinister resources, before the fullest dramaturgic risks (with correspondingly rich rewards) are undertaken. Only now, presumably, the dramatist feels that he has prepared the audience to accept the possibility of Othello's ensnarement.

References to the Cornelian structure might also assist us here. One Corneille editor who sums up the structure of the five acts could be translated freely thus:

> The first act makes clear the location of the action, the relations among the heroic figures (their situation), their interests, their characteristic ways, their intentions.
>
> The second gets the plot under way (*commence l'intrigue*).
>
> In the third, it reaches its full complication (literally, "it ties itself").
>
> The fourth prepares the untying (*dénouement*).
>
> And in the fifth act this resolution is completed.

The formula does not quite fit the particulars of *Cinna*. We do not know of Auguste's intentions until the second act; and we do not know until the third that Maxime is secretly in love with Emilie. So some of the development is got by *gradual revelation* of the character's designs.

However, the paradigm can help us glimpse a difference, in the third act, between a Cornelian "tying" and a Shakespearean

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"peripety". After all the workings at cross-purposes, the discovery that Maxime is in love with Emilie does serve to add the final complication. But this is hardly a reversal, such as we underwent at the beginning of Act II. Rather it is more like putting on "the last straw", by taking the final step in the directions already indicated. In contrast, recall the great peripety scene in *Julius Caesar,* Antony's speech to the mob. Here no such timely releasing of information is involved: as against the Cornelian transformation-by-information, we watch the transformations taking place before our eyes while we follow the effects of Antony's ingenious oratory. Similarly in *Othello,* the great scene in the third act where Iago finally springs the trap, involves no new disclosures, so far as the audience is concerned. We simply witness (with a pleasurable mixture of fear and admiration) a mounting series of upheavals, as Iago works his magic on the Moor.

Act IV: "The Pity of It." Indeed, might we not, even as a rule, call this station of a Shakespearean tragedy the "pity" act? There can be flashes of pity wherever opportunity offers, but might the fourth act be the one that seeks to say pity-pity-pity repeatedly? Thus, after the terror of Gloucester's eyes being torn out in Act III of *King Lear,* there is the pity of his blindness in Act IV, while the audience is likewise softened by the sweet tearfulness of Lear's reunion with Cordelia (father and daughter meeting like child and mother). In the same act of *Measure for Measure,* Mariana is pensively silent while the boy sings "Take, O take those lips away." In Hamlet, the corresponding stage is Ophelia's fatal bewilderment. In Macbeth, it is the killing of Macduff's son. And so on. Here, when Desdemona says to Othello, who has just struck her, "I have not deserved this," she almost literally repeats the Aristotelian formula for pity (that we pity those who suffer unjustly). And, after the slight flurry of hope when Othello, talking with Emilia, gets a report of Desdemona not at all like the one Iago had led him to expect, Desdemona's "willow" song is particularly sad because, in her preparations for Othello's return ("He says he will return incontinent") there are strong forebodings (making her rather like a victim going willingly towards sacrifice). She seems doubly frail, in both her body and her perfect forgiveness—an impression that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the audience will retain to the end, so that the drama attains maximum poignancy when Othello, hugely, throttles her.

In *Cinna*, it is in the fourth act that Auguste learns of the treachery. Pity here takes the modified form of manly grief, as he in a great soliloquy first accuses himself, then gradually moves towards a monarchic resolution ("*O Romains, ô vengeance, ô pouvoir absolu* . . ."). Then it undergoes another modification, as the Empress begs Auguste to treat the conspirators with mercy. And in this tragedy, too, I believe, we might select the fourth as the "pity act."

The reference to modifications in *Cinna* also reminds us that sometimes the pity can be used purely as a device to "soften up" the audience. The pity we feel for Desdemona singing the willow song is of this sort. At other times it can be used to motivate some act of vengeance on the part of some character in the play, as with Macduff on hearing of his son's death.

Act V is, of course, the bringing of all surviving characters to a final relationship, the resolution, in accordance with the original pointing of the arrows, arrows pointed both rationalistically, by intrigue, and through a succession of ideas and images (topics) that direct the play into one channel of associations rather than another, thereby "setting the tone", and getting new implications from the sum of the many passing explicit references. When Othello says, "Put out the light, and then put out the light," is he but making the scene for the act, hence finding a device for killing her three times (for even without this, she dies twice, as were the second time a weak nervous twitch following a previous strong expulsion)? Or is this, ritually, a double darkness, imaginally saying that his enclosed mind is now engrossed with still narrower enclosure?

This analysis of the form does not cover all the important fields of investigation, even as regards the succession of acts (or succession of stages, insofar as the present explicit division into five acts may have been the work of editors, rather than of the playwright). There is a kind of ritualistic form lurking behind a drama, perhaps not wholly analyzable in terms of the intrigue. That is, the drama (like such a Platonic dialogue as the *Phaedrus*) may be treated formally as a kind of "initiation into a mystery" —and when approached exclusively in such terms, the analysis

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the intrigue alone is not adequate. The mythic or ritual pattern (with the work as a viaticum for guiding us through a dark and dangerous passage) lurks behind the "rational" intrigue; and to some degree it requires a different kind of analysis, though ideally the course of the rational intrigue coincides with the course of the work, considered as viaticum.

Viewed in these terms, the first act would be "the way in". It states the primary conditions in terms of which the journey is to be localized or specified this time. The same essential journey could be taken in other terms; hence, there must be a point at which we glimpse the essence of the mystery as it lies beyond all terms; but this point can be reached only by going thoroughly into some one structure of terms. For though the ritual must always follow the same general succession of stages regardless of the intrigue, this course is repeated each time in the details proper to a particular intrigue. There is perhaps nothing essentially "irrational" about the stages of initiation; however, they may seem so, as contrasted with the rationality of the intrigue (with its need to present the natural development in terms of probability and necessity).

The second act (the introduction of the "second theme") would seem analogous to the definite pushing-off from shore. Of course, the very opening of the play was, in one sense, a pushing-off from shore, the abandoning of one realm for another. But once this decision has been taken, within its own internality there is another kind of departure when the second theme has entered, and we now do indeed feel ourselves under way (as though the bark had suddenly increased its speed, or suggested a further certainty in its movements).

In the peripety of the third act, the principle of internality confronts its very essence. Here is the withinness-of-withinness. It corresponds to the moment in the *Phaedrus* where Socrates has talked ecstatically of the soul as *self*-moving, as the "fountain and beginning of motion," and of a wing (a most unwinglike wing, by the way, with capacities that would also lend themselves well to psychoanalytic interpretation); and precisely following these topics, he arrives at "the heaven above the heavens" (the *hyperouranion,* which, by our notion, would figure the within-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ness-of-withinness); and he now comes forward with the enunciation of the principle that has been secretly directing our voyage: "There abides the very being with which true knowledge is concerned; the colourless, formless, intangible essence, visible only to mind, the pilot of the soul." (Before moving on from his principle of oneness to his doctrine of the hierarchic order which he would deduce from this principle, he further drives it home imaginally by talk of an ultimate feasting "in the interior of the heavens." He has thus brought together, and fused with his rational principle of oneness: flight in the sense of betterment; flight in the sense of sexual exaltation; and the notions of substantial contact that draw upon suggestions of feasting for many reasons both normal and perverse, the basic normal reason doubtless being the latent memory of the infant's sense of wholly joyous contact while feeding at the breast.)

Reverting now to the drama: In the third act, containing the peripety in a five-part form, we should arrive at some similar principle of internality. The principle is revealed at its best, perhaps, in *Hamlet*, since the play-within-a-play of the third act so clearly figures the withinness-of-withinness that we have in mind. The design is almost as clearly revealed in *Julius Caesar*, for Antony's speech before the Roman populace is similarly a kind of play-within-a-play. And to say as much is to see how the same principle informs the third act of *Othello*, with Iago here taking the role of Antony and Othello the role of the mob moved by his eloquence. However, as contrasted with the ecstatic moment of internality in the *Phaedrus*, here we confront a monstrous mock-revelation, in accordance with Iago's promise, at the end of Act I: "Hell and night/Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light." ("O it is monstrous! monstrous!" exclaims Alonso a few lines before the end of the third act in *The Tempest*, a play so greatly unlike *Othello* in attitude, since the destinies there are all in the direction of easement, but so greatly like it in one notable dramaturgic respect, since Prospero is even more influential than Iago in overseeing the development of the plot.)

What of the rite from here out? I take it that, from this point on, we are returning. We shall get back to the starting point, though with a difference, somewhat as with a child who, having

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gone the magic circle in the Old Mill at the amusement park, steps from the boat, walks past the same ticket booth that he had passed before entering: everything is literally the same as it was before, yet somehow everything is, in essense, altered.

There is presumably to be some kind of splitting, a "separating out." Something is to be dropped away, something retained, the whole history thereby becoming a purification of a sort. Seen from this point of view, the "pity act" reveals further possibilities. From the standpoint of intrigue, we noted how it might serve to motivate vengeance in one of the *dramatis personae*, or how it might serve to "soften up" the audience so that they would be more thoroughly affected by the butchery still to come. But from the standpoint of the "initiation," the pity may be viewed as one aspect of the "separating out," preparing us, in one way or another, to relinquish those figures who are to die for our edification.

The last act would complete this process. And it would "release" us in the sense that it would transform the passion into an assertion. For in a tragedy of sacrifice, the assertion need not be got through the *rescuing* of a character; more often it comes through the playwright's felicity in making sure that the character "dies well" (within the conditions of the fiction)—or, as regards the "separating out," the character whom we would disclaim must in some ultimate sense be destroyed, threatened, or branded. But, all told, the rite is complete when one has become willing to abandon the figures who vicariously represent his own tension. The work thus parallels what we have elsewhere cited a sociologist as terming a "ritual of riddance." It is a requiem in which we participate at the ceremonious death of a portion of ourselves. And whatever discomforts we may have experienced under the sway of this tension in life itself, as thus "imitated" in art it permits us the great privilege of being present at our own funeral. For though we be lowly and humiliated, we can tell ourselves at least that, as a corpse, if the usual rituals are abided by, we are assured of an ultimate dignity, that all men must pay us tribute insofar as they act properly, and that a sermon doing the best possible by us is in order.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

III

Dramatis Personae

First, as regards the rationality of the intrigue, the *dramatis personae* should be analyzed with reference to what we have elsewhere called the agent-act ratio. That is, the over-all action requires contributions by the characters whose various individual acts (and their corresponding passions) must suit their particular natures. And these acts must mesh with one another, in a dialectic of cooperative competition. So, in filling out the analysis of the *dramatis personae,* we should look for the acts, attitudes, ideas, and images that typify each of the characters (citing from the text, and discounting with regard to the role of the person that makes the statement). By the principle of the agent-act ratio, the dramatist prepares for an agent's act by building up the corresponding properties in that agent, properties that fit him for the act. Often, Shakespeare's great economy in attributing to a character only the traits needed for his action has led to misunderstanding about his methods: he is praised as though he aimed at "character-drawing" in the more novelistic sense. His characters' "life-like" quality, the illusion of their being fully rounded out as people, really derives from his dramaturgic skill in finding traits that act well, and in giving his characters only traits that suit them for the action needed of them. Often, purely situational aids are exploited here. Thus, much of Lucio's saliency in *Measure for Measure* derives from his ironic situation in forever slandering the Duke, or telling the Duke lies about his relations to the Duke, not knowing (as the audience does know) that he is talking to the Duke.

If the drama is imitating some tension that has its counterpart in conditions outside the drama, we must inquire into the dramatic analysis of this tension, asking ourselves what it might be, and how the dramatist proceeds to break down the psychosis into a usable spectrum of differentiated roles. That is, we must ask how many voices are needed to provide a sufficient range of "analogies" (with the over-all tension being variously represented in each of them). Though Iago-Othello-Desdemona are obviously

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the major trio here, a complete analysis would require us also to ask how each of the minor characters reflects some fragment of the tension (while serving, from the standpoint of the intrigue, to help the three major persons dramatically communicate with one another).

Thus, briefly, Brabantio is handy in relating the tension to an earlier stage, when Desdemona was her father's property. We follow a change from father-daughter to husband-wife—and this history also supplies a kind of tragic flaw for Desdemona, a magic mark against her, and one that Iago will use likewise, to further the intrigue. For the first suspicion of Desdemona had been uttered by none other than her own father:

> *Look to her, Moor, if thou hast eyes to see:*
> *She has deceiv'd her father, and may thee.*

Dramaturgically speaking, there had been this one false note, as regards Desdemona. Even if it had escaped the notice of the audience, the dramatist reconstructs it when Iago says to Othello: "She did deceive her father, marrying you . . ." etc.

The Duke, besides his convenience for details of the plot, provides ways for better identifying the psychosis, or tension, with matters of State (a dignification that, as we shall show later, is particularly important in this play).

Roderigo (marked by Iago's line, "put money in thy purse"), helps build up by contrast Desdemona's *spirituality* of property. (Emilia's coarseness similarly contributes, as does Bianca's disreputableness.) Roderigo is also handy in providing Iago with a confidant (and thereby allowing for a further mark against Iago, who is seen to be deceiving even him).

Cassio's role as "second theme" is obvious. We should also note how he bridges the high motives and the low, as his reverence for Desdemona is matched by his cynical attitude towards Bianca. Though we shall not here study the relations and functions of the minor characters in detail, perhaps we could most quickly indicate what we are here aiming at, if we noted two possible directly contrasting ways of dealing with Cassio.

In accordance with what we might call the "novelistic" approach to the *dramatis personae* (as a set of character-portraits), one might remark that, although Cassio was in many

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ways an admirable man, unfortunately he could not hold his liquor. Then one might remark that Iago, who happened to be a scheming wretch, took advantage of Cassio's weakness, to set him at odds with Othello.

But for our purposes the observations should be reversed thus: If Iago is to set Cassio at odds with Othello, the playwright must provide for Iago some plausible way of getting a hold on Cassio. And he can provide such a hold by endowing Cassio with this weakness (whereby Cassio's necessary befuddlement will be "characteristic" of him, while the playwright can further motivate the development situationally by staging the scene at a time of general revelry, when Cassio might be most likely, in the audience's opinion, to take a drink against his better judgment, at Iago's prodding).

It has been suggested that Othello's motives might have been explained on the basis of his status as a parvenu. By antithesis, this notion serves excellently to indicate the sort of approach we think should be employed in this section of the dramatis personae. The notion gains further credence from the fact that Iago himself discusses such a condition with relation to his disgruntlement with Cassio: "Preferment goes by letter and affection,/And not by the old gradation, where each second/Stood heir to the first." (I, i, 36). And though such unsettlement is certainly to be considered always, as a possible motive complicating the magic of class relationships in Elizabethan times, for our purposes we should turn the matter around, putting it thus:

One notable aspect of the tension Shakespeare is exploiting is the lover's sense of himself as a parvenu. For ennoblement through love is a new richness (a notable improving of one's status, a destiny that made love a good symbol for secretly containing the political aspirations of the bourgeois as *novus homo*). Hence, in breaking the proprieties of love into their components, in dramatically carving this idea at the joints, we should encounter also in Othello as lover the theme of the newly rich, the marriage above one's station. And misgivings (which could be dramatized as murderous suspicions) would be proper to this state, insofar as the treasured object stands for many things that no human being could literally be. So, in contrast with the notion of the play as the story of a black (low-born) man cohabiting with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(identified with) the high-born (white) Desdemona, we should say rather that the role of Othello as "Moor" draws for its effects upon the sense of the "black man" in every lover. There is a converse ennoblement from Desdemona's point of view, in that Othello is her unquestioned "lord". And could we not further say that such categorical attributing of reverence to the male (in a social context of double sexual standards) necessarily implies again some suspicions of inadequacy. The very sovereignty that the male absolutely arrogates to himself, as an essential aspect of private property in human affection, introduces a secret principle of self-doubt—which would be properly "imitated" in the ascribing of "inferior" origins to Othello, even in the midst of his nobility. And though the reader might not agree with this explanation in detail, it can serve in principle to indicate the *kind* of observation we think the analysis of the dramatis personae requires. For, in contrast with the novelistic "portrait gallery" approach to Shakespeare's characters, so prevalent in the nineteenth century, one should here proceed not from character-analysis to the view of the character in action, but from the logic of the *action as a whole*, to the analysis of the character as a recipe fitting him for his proper place in the action (as regards both the details of the intrigue and the imitating of the tension by dramatic dissociation into interrelated roles).

Since A. C. Bradley was one of the best critics who tended to approach Shakespeare "novelistically", we might develop our position best by commenting on some of his comments. Thus, when Bradley writes, "Desdemona's sweetness and forgiveness are not based on religion," I can think of no remark better fitted to deflect attention from the sort of approach I have in mind. To arouse our pity here, Shakespeare places Desdemona in a sacrificial situation wherein she gives herself up as a gentle victim, with malice towards none. We have mentioned Aristotle's formula, that men pity those who suffer unjustly. But Shakespeare's usage involves a further motive. For pity is extracted most effectively from the spectacle of suffering if the tormented, at the very height of the torment, forgives the tormentor. The scene in which she sings the willow song casts her perfectly in the role of one preparing meekly for sacrifice. And her sorrow is in the same mode when, having been fatally attacked by her husband, she speaks as her parting words: "Commend me to my

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

kind lord. O! farewell!" Here Shakespeare goes as far as he can towards making her conduct Christlike. And this *exploiting* of a religious pattern as a part of the playwright's design upon the audience's sympathies is a much more important detail about Desdemona as a character-recipe than the fact that, literally, she is not strong on theological references.

On the other hand, the playwright is always careful to see that, however austere the perfectly piteous offering may be, the audience is not confined to such exacting responses. There are others in the play who will help the audience to have its vengeance straight. The "hellish villain" is excoriated before their very eyes by his own wife. And he is to be tortured: it is a promise. Similarly, in *King Lear*, even as the pitiful burdens of the old man's helplessness begin to mount upon us, the audience is audibly gratified, murmuring contentedly, when Kent lets loose his manly invective against Oswald.

But Bradley does make a remark usable for our purposes when he says of Emilia: "From the moment of her appearance after the murder to the moment of her death she is transfigured; and yet she remains perfectly true to herself, and we would not have her one atom less herself. She is the only person who utters for us the violent emotions which we feel, together with those more tragic emotions which she does not comprehend." To be sure, Bradley is here still talking as though there had been some surprising change in her *character*, whereas we would have him approach such matters more directly, in terms of a transfiguration in her *role*. Because of her relation to Iago within the conditions of the play, because of the things she alone knows, she is in the best position to take over the vindictive role we eagerly require of *someone* at this point. Or, you could state it thus: Some disclosures are due, she is in a position to make them, and if she makes them venomously, she will do best by our pent-up fury, a fury still further heightened by the fact that Desdemona died Christlike.

But when Bradley writes of Emilia, "What could better illustrate those defects of hers which make one wince, than her repeating again and again in Desdemona's presence the word Desdemona could not repeat . . .", here is sheer portraiture, and done in a way that conceals the functioning of the play. The dramatist must continually keep vibrant with the audience, as an

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

essential element in the psychosis, the animal words for sexuality. Iago, of course, carries the main burden of this task. But when he is not about, others must do it for him. It is important that the audience simultaneously associate Desdemona with such motives, and dissociate her from them. Here is the very centre of the tension. Iago does not often speak to Desdemona; and even when he does, within the conditions of the play he could not plausibly speak to her thus, without lowering her in our esteem. But Emilia is perfectly suited to maintain this general tenor of the imagery, so necessary for retaining the exact mixture of pudency and prurience needed for exploiting the tension. And besides thus keeping the motive vigorous, Emilia's use of such terms gives Desdemona's avoidance of them a *positive* or *active* character—and activation, actualization, is sought for always.

At first glance, one might expect us to welcome Thomas Rhymer's notion that Emilia's remarks, after the willow scene, are designed merely as relief ("that we may not be kept too long in the dumps, nor the melancholy Scenes lye too heavy, undigested in the Stomach"). But the theory of "comic relief" has been repeated too often to be trustworthy. And at the very least, we might look at it more closely. In one sense a tragic playwright should have no interest in giving his audience "comic relief". At least, we'd expect him to be as overwhelmingly and protractedly tragic as he could, without risk that the audience might rebel.

In forms such as Cornelian tragedy, "comic relief" was ruled out by the conditions of the game. The conventions required that the ceremonious gesture be sustained throughout. So-called "comic relief", on the other hand, allows for a shift in tonality that permits the dramatist to relax the tension without risking the loss of the audience's interest. He can turn suddenly to a different mode, which allows him later to start building anew from a lower intensity. In this respect, the device at least gives relief to the *dramatist*. But we would suggest this possibility: Rather than treating such a device merely as "comic relief", might one discern in it a subtler diplomacy? When the audience is carried beyond a certain intensity, it threatens to rebel, for its own comfort. But the playwright might engage it even here too, by shifting just before the audience is ready to rebel. However, he will shift in ways that subtly rebuke the audience for its resistance, and make it willing afterwards to be brought back into

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

line. For in the "comic relief", he makes sure that the rebellion is voiced by "inferior" characters, as when Emilia, very nearly at the end of the fourth act, throws doubt on the entire system of "values" motivating Othello, Desdemona, and Iago, all three.

Desdemona has said, "Wouldst thou do such a deed for all the world?"—and Emilia answers, "The world is a huge thing; 'tis a great price/For a small vice." She continues in this vein, and as the act ends, this motive is strong with us. Yet she here utters the basic heresy against the assumptions on which this play is built. What of that? We would explain the tactics thus:

A tragic plot deals with an *excessive* engrossment. Hence, many average members of the audience might be secretly inclined to resist it when it becomes too over-wrought. Accordingly, one might think it unwise of the dramatist to let their resistance be expressed on the stage.

However, Emilia is present among the big three as an average mortal among the gods. Thus, though in her role she represents a motivation strong with the audience, she is "low" while tragedy is "high". Hence in effect she is suggesting that any resistance to the assumptions of the tragedy are "low", and that "noble" people will choose the difficult way of Desdemona. And since, by the rules of the game, we are there for elevation, *her* voicing of our resistance protects, rather than endangers, the tragic engrossment. For the members of the audience, coming here to be ennobled, would bear witness to their high spiritual state by fearing the right things, as Aristotle in the *Nichomachaean Ethics* reminds us that there is a nobility in fear when we fear properly.

But let us return to Bradley. When discussing the contrast between Iago's "true self and the self he presented to the world in general", Bradley writes: "It is to be observed . . . that Iago was able to find a certain relief from the discomfort of hypocrisy in those caustic or cynical speeches which, being misinterpreted, only heightened confidence in his honesty. They acted as a safety-valve, very much as Hamlet's pretended insanity did."

Just as I was trying to make clear why I think these remarks malapropos, Bradley helped me by bringing in this reference to Hamlet's "pretended insanity". Passing over the fact that Hamlet's use of insanity as a ruse, while playing for time to avenge the murder, was part of the traditional story from which

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Shakespeare presumably adapted his own play, we would note other kinds of tactical considerations here.

Thus, when analyzing the plays of Shaw, we have noticed that, by introducing the use of a cantankerous character among the dramatis personae, Shaw could always guaranty himself a certain minimum of flurry on the stage. If nothing else was going on, he could let this character exercise for a while, in spirited Shavian fashion, until the plot was ready to resume. In *The Cocktail Party,* Eliot gets a similar effect by a situational device. It is doubtful whether his personal temperament includes the kind of spirited character that came easy with Shaw. But within his means, he could get an equivalent effect situationally, by vexations, as characters enter at the wrong moment, return suddenly when they are supposed to have left for good, phone or call from the other room inopportunely, the whole adding up to a series of interruptions that is a secular equivalent of mortification, and contrives at the very least to keep things amusingly stirred up. Now, why could we not similarly note that Hamlet's malingering is an excellent device for maintaining a certain minimum of dramatic tension? And the device could serve further to give his utterances an oracular tone. For oracles traditionally speak thus ambiguously; hence the tomfoolery, combined with Hamlet's already established solemnity, could well help place his remarks under the sign of a fate-laden brooding.

The device also aided well in covering up one great embarrassment of the work. For the job of delaying Hamlet's vengeance until the fifth act, whereas he was so clearly in a physical position to kill the king in the first, and had unmistakably established the king's guilt in the third, threatened to arouse the audience's resentment. But the problematical aspect of Hamlet (made picturesque and convincing by the gestures of madness) could be of great assistance to the playwright. And only insofar as the tactics of delay were acceptable would the continuation of the play be possible. On the other hand, if it was necessary to explain Hamlet's pretended insanity as a "safety-valve", why did not so articulate a playwright as Shakespeare stress the point?

Bradley says of Iago: "Next, I would infer from the entire success of his hypocrisy—what may also be inferred on other grounds, and is of great importance—that he was by no means a man of strong feelings and passions, like Richard, but decidedly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cold by temperament. Even so, his self-control was wonderful, but there never was in him any violent storm to be controlled."

Here again, looking at the matter from the standpoint of the principle we would advocate, we note rather that Shakespeare has no need for a turbulent figure like Othello here. Iago is properly the principle of steely suspicion that works upon the passions. And if he already has a complete function to perform in accordance with such a character, why should Shakespeare shower irrelevant traits upon him?

Shakespeare is making a play, not people. And as a dramatist he must know that the illusion of a well-rounded character is produced, not by piling on traits of character, until all the scruples of an academic scholar are taken care of, but by *so building a character-recipe in accord with the demands of the action that every trait the character does have is saliently expressed in action or through action.* Here is the way to get "actualization". And such dramatic perfection of expression, whereby the salient traits are expressed in action, may then induce us to fill in (by inference) whatever further traits we may consider necessary for rounding out the character. The stress upon character as an intrinsic property, rather than as an illusion arising functionally from the context, leads towards a non-dramatic explanation. And one can end by attributing to a character certain traits, or trends of thought, for which no line of text can be directly adduced as evidence.

I do not object categorically to such impressions. I would merely suggest that the line of inquiry with relation to them should be altered. *They are the preparatory material for critical analysis, not the conclusions.* If the critic feels that the spectacle of the character in action leads him spontaneously to round out the character, in his own mind, by inferences that Shakespeare has not explicitly sought to establish as motives in the play, then his job should be not just to show that he makes such inferences, nor just to record his exaltation in the contemplation of them; but rather he should aim to explain how, by the few traits which *are* used for the actualizing of a role, the playwright can produce the illusion of a rounded character.

Whereas it has become customary to speak of Shakespeare's figures as of living people, the stupidest and crudest person who ever lived is richer in motivation than all of Shakespeare's char-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

acters put together—and it would be either a stupidity or a sacrilege to say otherwise. It is as an artist, not as God, that he invents "characters". And to see him fully as an artist, we must not too fully adopt the Coleridgean view of art as the "dim analogue of creation".

The risk in "portraiture" of the Bradleyan sort (and Samuel Johnson has done it admirably too, also with reference to *Othello*) is that the critic *ends* where he should *begin*. As Jimmy Durante has so relevantly said, "Everybody wants to get into the act." In this sense, impressionistic criticism would write the work over again. Let the critic be as impressionistic as he wants, if he but realize that his impressions are the *beginning* of his task as a critic, not the *end* of it. Indeed, the richer his impressions the better, if he goes on to show how the author produced them. But the great risk in "conclusive" statements about a work is that they give us the feeling of *conclusions* when the real work of analysis still lies before us.

Bradley even asks us to "look more closely into Iago's inner man." The expression almost suggests that Iago is so real, one might profitably hire a psychoanalyst to get at the roots of him. And in the same spirit, after noting that "Shakespeare put a good deal of himself into Iago", Bradley continues: "But the tragedian of real life [sic!] was not the equal of the tragic poet. His psychology, as we shall see, was at fault at a critical point, as Shakespeare's never was. And so his catastrophe came out wrong, and his piece was ruined."

When Bradley says of Iago, "He was unreasonably jealous; for his own statement that he was jealous of Othello is confirmed by Emilia herself, and must therefore be believed (IV, ii, 145)," here we would offer another kind of purely poetic consideration, in contrast with Bradley's novelistic portraiture. In line with Francis Fergusson's discussion of "analogy" in his analysis of *Hamlet* (*Idea of a Theater*), we would note that Iago is here placed in a position analogous to that which is finally forced upon Othello. Such analogy at the very least gives greater consistency to a work, carrying out the principle of repetitive form, by varying a theme. But it does more. For the area of similarity between Iago and Othello here serves also to point up the great difference between them. (Coleridge reminds us dialectically that *rivales* are opposite banks of the same stream.) Hence, Iago's *ignoble*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

suspicions by contrast make Othello's suspicions seem *more noble,* thereby helping induce us to believe that he killed Desdemona not just in jealousy, but for the sake of "honour". Or, otherwise put: here is the principle of the "reflector", discussed in one of Henry James's prefaces. If you have several characters all looking at the *same* object, you can thereby point up the differences in their perceiving of it. And in attributing to Iago a suspicion analogous to the one he would arouse in Othello, the poet thus is in his way using the "reflector" principle. Also, at the very least, Iago's suspicion helps motivate his vindictiveness, and "rationally". For in situations where "honour" is taken as a primary motive, it usually follows that *vengeance* can serve as "rational" motivation of an act (a point to be remembered always, when considering motivations purely on the level of the intrigue).

But let us, in concluding this section, make sure that we do not take on more burdens than we must. To read Stanislavsky's notes on the staging of *Othello* is to realize that, in our novel-minded age at least, the actor is helped in building up his role by such portraiture as Bradley aims at. We will hypothetically grant that the novelistic method may be best for aiding the actor to sink himself in his role. Give him a "physical task", such as Stanislavsky looks for, to make sure that in each scene he can operate on something more substantial and reliable than his mood and temperament. Then, once you have made sure of this operational base, allow for as much novelistic improvising as can give the actor a sense of fullness in his role. Maybe so. But we would still contend that, *so far as the analysis of the playwright's invention is concerned,* our proposed way of seeing the agent in terms of the over-all action would be required by a dramaturgic analysis of the characters.

IV

Peripety

This section, to be complete, should trace the development of the plot, stressing particularly the ways in which the playwright builds up "potentials" (that is, gives the audience a more or less vague or explicit "in our next" feeling at the end of each scene, and subsequently transforms such promises into fulfilments). The potentialities of one scene would thus become the actualiza-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tions of the next, while these in turn would be potentials, from the standpoint of unfoldings still to come.

Bradley's remark, "Iago's plot is Iago's character in action," is excellent, unless it tempts us, as it did him, to reverse the order of our inquiry, looking at Iago's conduct as though it were the outgrowth of his character, rather than looking at his character as having been so formed by the playwright that it would be a perfect fit for the kind of conduct the play required of him. But in any case, since Iago's schemings are to be appreciated as such, and since they form the plot itself, the audience is somewhat invited to watch the plot as plot.

However, we shall here confine ourselves mainly to the peripety, Act III, scene iii.

Iago has promised so to manipulate the meaning of events that Othello will be led to misinterpret what goes on before his very eyes (and the eyes of the audience, who know exactly the nature of his errors). Iago now faithfully fulfils his promise; and after proper preparation of the audience under the guise of preparing Othello, he finally becomes like a fiend goading an elephant, making the ungainly beast rear on its hind legs, thrash in bewilderment, and trumpet in anguish. As the scene begins, no suspicion of Desdemona has crossed Othello's mind (unless you except the warning of Brabantio's which at least had brought up the topic, as ambiguous foreshadowing, in Othello's presence).

In the first scene of the third act, after mild horseplay with clown and musicians, a strong potential was established: Iago got his wife to arrange for Cassio's meeting with Desdemona. Never missing an opportunity to keep the innuendoes vibrant, the playwright has Emilia tell Cassio of Othello's desire "To take the saf'st occasion by the front" for reinstating Cassio. Thus with the assurance that Cassio will be where we need him, there follows a brief scene of seven lines, wherein the playwright helps Iago help the playwright get Othello properly placed. Then, along with the usual references to Iago as "honest" (which, since they call for an easy kind of translating, thereby also help induce the audience to collaborate in the making of the play) we hear Desdemona assuring Cassio that she will importune Othello in his behalf. (For potential, as regards "Cassio's suit", she states her intentions fatally: "Thy solicitor shall rather die/Than give thy cause away.") We are now ready for the grand interweavings,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as Othello and Iago enter at a distance, Cassio leaves, and Iago mutters, "Ha! I like not that."

OTHELLO. *What dost thou say?*
IAGO. *Nothing, my lord: or if—I know not what.*
OTHELLO. *Was not that Cassio parted from my wife?*
IAGO. *Cassio, my lord? No, sure, I cannot think it*
That he would steal away so guilty-like
Seeing you coming.
OTHELLO. *I do believe 'twas he.*
DESDEMONA. *How now, my lord!*
I have been talking with a suitor here,
["suitor"—ill-starred word!]
A man that languishes in your displeasure.
OTHELLO. *Who is't you mean?*
DESDEMONA. *Why, your lieutenant, Cassio*
[who, we vibrantly learn, "has left part of his grief" with her.]

Thus, by his stutterings, Iago has taken an incident actually neutral, and made it grim for Othello. The audience now has a pattern for creating vigorously: *translating* (the inducement to an audience's self-persuasion that resides in the use of dramatic irony). Desdemona continues to importune (and the playwright helps her help Iago by having her, in the course of remarks, say to Othello: "What! Michael Cassio,/That came a wooing with you, and so many a time,/When I have spoke of you dispraisingly,/Hath ta'en your part"). After Desdemona has left, Othello sums up the motivations perfectly: "Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul,/But I do love thee! and when I love thee not,/Chaos is come again." Whereupon, Iago resumes his pattern, making non-committal remarks that invite Othello to do the committing for himself:

IAGO. *My noble lord, —*
OTHELLO. *What dost thou say, Iago?*
IAGO. *Did Michael Cassio, when you woo'd my lady,*
Know of your love?
[We now see the full dramatic utility of Desdemona's reference to Cassio "a wooing."]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

OTHELLO. *He did, from first to last: why dost thou ask?*
IAGO. *But for a satisfaction of my thought;*
No further harm.
OTHELLO. *Why of thy thought, Iago?*
IAGO. *I did not think he had been acquainted with her.*
OTHELLO. *O! yes; and went between us very oft.*
IAGO. *Indeed!*
OTHELLO. *Indeed! ay, indeed; discern'st thou aught in that?*
Is he not honest?

[Fatal word. If the devil Iago is honest, then Cassio and Desdemona, being honest, will be devils.]

IAGO. *Honest, my lord?*
OTHELLO. *Honest! ay, honest.*
IAGO. *My lord, for aught I know.*
OTHELLO. *What dost thou think?*
IAGO. *Think, my lord!*
OTHELLO. *Think, my lord!*
By heaven, he echoes me.
As if there were some monster in his thought
Too hideous to be shown. Thou dost mean something:
I heard thee say but now, thou lik'st not that,
And when I told thee he was of my counsel
In my whole course of wooing, thou criedst, 'Indeed!'
As if thou then hadst shut up in thy brain
Some horrible conceit. If thou dost love me,
Show me thy thought.

Here the Moor's magnificent upsurge is built around his own description of Iago's tactics. Thus not only is the device used, but in a dramatized way the audience is informed that it is being used, and what its nature is.

Thence to a new device: Iago, to bring up the theme of jealousy, doubts himself, blames himself, begs Othello to make

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

due allowances: "As, I confess, it is my nature's plague/To spy into abuses, and oft my jealousy/Shapes faults that are not." The topic is thus introduced, under the guise of asking that it be avoided. A drastic variant of the *praeteritio*, and one that will soon be developed further, as Iago proves himself a master of the "Say the Word" device whereby the important thing is to see that the summarizing word, the drastically relevant motivating title is spoken. For in its nature as imagery, inviting one to make oneself over in its image, no "no" can cancel it; it could only be abolished by another image—not by a negative, but by a still stronger positive, and the only stronger one, as we shall see later, will not overwhelm it, but will serve as the ultimate reënforcement of it.

Meanwhile, after some near-puns on treasure ("Who steals my purse steals trash," etc. . . . "but he that filches from me my good name," etc.), near-puns, since they half suggest other kinds of repository, likewise to be conceived in association with one's good name—next Iago can exploit directly the topic that he had introduced roundabout: "O! beware, my lord, of jealousy;/It is the green-ey'd monster which doth mock/The meat it feeds on." But now he is gathering momentum, and he rounds out his statement by adding another term, "cuckold", just as a topic, not yet explicitly pointed. And he contrives to Say the Word by another route: "Good heaven, the souls of all my tribe defend/From jealousy!"

Then, as regards the audience, Othello makes the next important contribution: "Think'st thou I'd make a life of jealousy,/To follow still the changes of the moon/With fresh suspicions?" The involvements of property here take a momentous step forward. By the catamenial theme, time and the very motions of the heavens begin to interweave themselves with Othello's endangered treasure; or, otherwise put, the personal and social nature of such property now begins to move towards ultimate transmogrification, made part of nature, and cosmologized.

But now a new tack is needed. Othello must show strong resistance, too. Otherwise, this bullfight will not be spectacle enough. So after himself introducing the topic of "goat", which Iago will exploit later, he swings into revolt against these ingeniously inculcated obsessions, ending on a demand for proof.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

During the discussion of proof, Iago adopts the role of one who is himself looking for proof. Iago is not arguing with Othello ever (quite as a good dramatist would never think of arguing with his audience). Rather, he takes the role of one who is joining with Othello to get the matter clear, and would himself rejoice if his suspicions were proved wrong. But, as if half grudgingly (after having talked of feminine deception generally), he does recall how Desdemona had once deceived her father. He glancingly suggests that Othello is not "Of her own clime, complexion, and degree." He contrives to keep the theme going by a hint of a pun his author was much given to, as he speaks of "her country forms". Then he leaves the stage (whereat Othello can sum up by musing, "This honest creature, doubtless,/Sees and knows more, much more, than he unfolds"); then returns to make a special point of the plot potential, in asking that Othello leave Desdemona free to meet with Cassio.

Left alone this time, Othello muses on the problems of his sweet property: "O curse of marriage! That we can call these delicate creatures ours,/And not their appetites. I had rather be a toad,/And live upon the vapour of a dungeon,/Than keep a corner in the thing I love/For others' uses." And as Iago had previously told Roderigo that "they say base men being in love have then a nobility in their natures more than is native to them," so Othello here likewise considers love in hierarchic terms: "Yet, 'tis the plague of great ones;/Prerogativ'd are they less than the base."

Then, after Desdemona has made her invaluable contribution to the plot by losing her handkerchief, ("Your napkin is too little," Othello had said), and Iago has come into possession of it (informing the audience that he will "in Cassio's lodging lose this napkin,/And let him find it"), Othello sums up the major cluster of his motives, yielding now frankly to his suspicions:

> *O! now, for ever*
> *Farewell the tranquil mind; farewell content!*
> *Farewell the plumed troop and the big wars*
> *That make ambition virtue! O, farewell!*
> *Farewell the neighing steed, and the shrill trump,*
> *The spirit-stirring drum, the ear-piercing fife,*
> *The royal banner, and all quality,*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Pride, pomp, and circumstance of glorious war!
And, O you mortal engines, whose rude throats
The immortal Jove's dread clamours counterfeit,
Farewell! Othello's occupation's gone.

In accordance with our method, we cannot lay too much stress upon this speech. For the audience is here told explicity what the exclusive possession of Desdemona equals for Othello, with what "values" other than herself she is identified. Here they are listed: Ambition, virtue, quality, pride, pomp, circumstance, glory, and zest in his dangerous occupation. Within the magnificently emotional utterance, there is thus an almost essay-like summary. Over and above what she *is*, Othello tells us in effect, here are the things she *stands for*. All these non-sexual elements are implicit in her sex, which is enigmatically, magically, by the roundabout route of courtly mystery, the emblem of them. For such reasons as this, he could later call himself "an honourable murderer", saying that he did "all in honour" in slaying the charismatic figure who once had announced her intention "to preserve this vessel for my lord." (In the fourth act, a similar identification will be mentioned briefly: "O, the world has not a sweeter creature; she might lie by an emperor's side, and command him tasks.")

When he threatens to turn his fury against Iago, as he spasmodically doubts his own torrents of doubt, Iago now lets loose upon the audience Shakespeare's best rhetoric of *enargeia*, in bringing the particulars of infidelity before Othello's, and thus the audience's very eyes, first obliquely, then finally by his lie that implicates Desdemona in the lascivious movements and treacherous mutterings attributed to Cassio in his sleep.

Now is the time for the *materializing* of these fatal errors, concentrated in the handkerchief as their spirit made manifest. Iago: "But such a handkerchief—/I am sure it was your wife's—did I today/See Cassio wipe his beard with." Within the explicit conditions of the plot, it has been charged with fatal implications —whereat the scene, like the raging Pontick which Othello likens to himself (no ebb tide, all flood), now takes its "compulsive course", with "violent pace", while amidst shouts of "black vengeance", "hollow hell", "aspics' tongues" and "bloody

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

thoughts", Iago and Othello come to kneel together, swearing vengeance and loyalty in vengeance—and then, finally, once more, a variant of the Say the Word device, introducing the theme while ostensibly speaking against it:

IAGO. *My friend is dead; 'tis done at your request:*
But let her live.

OTHELLO. *Damn her, lewd minx! O, damn her!*
Come, go with me apart; I will withdraw
To furnish me with some swift means of death
For the fair devil.

Kneeling together, and well they should, for they are but two parts of a single motive—related not as the halves of a sphere, but each implicit in the other.[2]

V

"The Wonder"

"So much ado, so much stress, so much passion about an Handkerchief! Why was not this call'd the *Tragedy of the Handkerchief?* . . . We have heard of *Fortunatus his Purse*, and of the *Invisible Cloak*, long ago worn threadbare, and stow'd up in the Wardrobe of obsolete Romances: one might think, that there were a fitter place for this Handkerchief, than that it, at this time of day, be worn on the Stage, to raise every where all this clutter and turmoil. Had it been *Desdemona's* Garter, the Sagacious Moor might have smelt a Rat: but the Handkerchief is so remote a trifle, no Booby, on this side Mauritania, cou'd make any consequence from it."

"*Desdemona* dropt her Handkerchief; therefore she must be stifl'd."

"Here we see the meanest woman in the Play takes this *Handkerchief* for a *trifle* below her Husband to trouble his head about it. Yet we find, it entered into our Poet's head, to make a Tragedy of this *Trifle.*"

—Thomas Rhymer

"Sure, there's some wonder in this handkerchief," Desdemona had confided to Emilia; "I am most unhappy in the loss of it."

[2]Note that, as the scene progresses, Iago's part in the development gradually diminishes. And his contribution is in inverse ratio to Othello's increasing engagement. At first he must act vigorously, to set Othello into motion. But once Othello has been fully aroused, and is swinging violently, Iago's role is reduced to a series of slight additional pushes, each just enough to maintain the sweeping rhythm of Othello's passion.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And well she might be. For the handkerchief will sum up the entire complexity of motives. It will be public evidence of the conspiracy which Othello now wholly believes to exist (and which, according to our notions on the ironies of property, *does* exist). And by the same token, it will be the privacy of Desdemona made public. If she is enigmatic, emblematic, the gracious fetish not only of Othello, but of all who abide by these principles of spiritual ownership, then her capital as a woman is similarly representative, the emblem of her as emblem. Hence, this handkerchief that bridges realms, being the public surrogate of secrecy, it is an emblem's emblem—and in his belief that she had made a free gift of it to another, Othello feels a torrential sense of universal loss. Since it stands for Desdemona's privacy, and since this privacy in turn had stood magically for his entire sense of worldly and cosmological order, we can readily see why, for Othello, its loss becomes the ultimate obscenity. But there is a further point to be considered, thus:

Aristotle has said that accidents are best accepted in a tragedy when they are placed before the play's beginning, unless they can be made to seem fate-guided. Explicitly, there is no attempt here to show that the handkerchief is lost and found by supernatural guidance. The bluntness of the convenience is tempered by two devices of the plot: (1) Othello, by talking about it, calls the audience's clear attention to it when it falls; (2) since Emilia finds it and gives it to Iago, rather than Iago's finding it himself after having talked of wanting it, the addition of this intermediate step provides a certain tactful modulation between Desdemona's losing it and Iago's getting it. (Also, incidentally, this roundabout approach supplies complications that will later enable the plot to operate somewhat "of itself", when things must turn against the great impresario, Iago, Emilia having been given the information that leads to the exposing of him.)

But our main point is this: There is a kind of magic in the handkerchief, for the audience as well as for Othello—and this property serves as the *equivalent* of a fate-guided accident (the miraculous). It is this miraculous ingredient in the handkerchief that makes the audience willing to accept, so late in the play, the accident whereby Iago came into possession of it after giving notice that he wanted it. Or we'll state our position in modified

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

form: Insofar as the accident is resented, the audience has not felt the equivalent for the fate-guided that we have in mind.

As we began with the subject of pollution (the subject of catharsis), so here, when on the subject of wonder (the other great lure of tragedy) we must return to it. Some psychoanalytic theorists have written of instances where, in dreams, the various secretions of the human body may become interchangeable. "The gist of the matter," Freud says, "is the replacement of an important secretion . . . by an indifferent one." And in accordance with this principle, we believe that some of the "wonder" in this object derives from such ambiguities, which Othello had been made to suggest remotely when he said to Desdemona, "I have a salt and sorry rheum offends me./Lend me thy handkerchief." Perhaps we are looking too closely; but the adjective "salt" previously appeared in Iago's expression, "As salt as wolves in pride," used when first stirring Othello to jealousy. (*Oxford*—Pride: mettle or spirit in a horse, 1592; sexual desire, "heat", esp. in female animals, 1604.) A related usage appears in Act II, scene i, where Iago, lying to Roderigo about Cassio, speaks of "his salt and most hidden loose affection."

In any case, we can see for a certainty how Shakespeare proceeds to identify the handkerchief at the beginning of the fourth act, where Iago shifts from talk of one "naked with her friend a-bed" to talk of a hypothetical handkerchief. And the playwright bluntly reënforces the identification by having Othello fall "into an epilepsy" precisely from the strain of repeating, in great frenzy, this same drastic association of ideas which Iago had imposed upon him. As with the speech that ended, "Othello's occupation's gone", a simple "essayistic" listing of associated topics underlies the expression here too. Indeed, since the intensity of Othello's agitation calls properly for a disregard of syntax, the speech at the beginning and the end does merely state the topics to be associated in our minds:

> *Lie with her! lie on her! We say, lie on her, when they belie her. Lie with her! That's fulsome. Handkerchief,—confessions,—handkerchief! . . . Pish! Noses, ears, and lips. Is it possible?—Confess!—Handkerchief!—O devil!* [Falls in a trance.]

Shakespeare thus does all he can to make sure that this object be the perfect materialization of the tension which the play is to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

exploit, or "imitate". Again, note that it has both intimate and public aspects, being sometimes tucked away, sometimes held in full view. It thus has likewise the pontificating attributes best suited to such an object, and to the kind of mock-revelation it is to supply.

Othello mostly carries on the work of endowing it, for the audience, with a full range of magic properties. Thus, while speaking of it to Desdemona, in warning her belatedly against its loss, he uses such resonant expressions as these, all turned in the direction of the magical: "Egyptian" . . . "to my mother" . . . "charmer" . . . "subdue my father" . . . "but if she lost it" . . . "she dying gave it me" . . . "To lose't or give 't away, were such perdition/As nothing else could match" . . . "magic" . . . "A sibyl, that had number'd in the world/The sun to course two hundred compasses" (one should also contrive to implicate the story meteorologically) . . . "prophetic fury" . . . "dy'd in mummy" . . . "conserv'd of maidens' hearts". (And, he could add, what all these ingredients are but deflections of: Vessel now standing for a hierarchic nest of roles; the public emblem of Desdemona's privacy, which principle in turn is but the concentrate of Desdemona, herself charismatically infused, visibly, tangibly, embodying the tensions, or mysteries of property, as thus personalized with a grace in Desdemona that sets off, and is complemented by, the Othello-Iago grandeur).[3]

Truth, too, is implicated here, terrifyingly. In ownership as thus conceived, our play is saying in effect, there is also forever lurking the sinister invitation to an ultimate lie, an illusion carried to the edge of metaphysical madness, as private ownership, thus projected into realms for which there are no unquestionably attested securities, is seen to imply also, profoundly, ultimately, estrangement; hence, we may in glimpses peer over the abyss into the regions of pure abstract loneliness. All this condition follows

[3]As for Rhymer's assertion that the handkerchief is trivial: Shakespeare answered it in advance when Desdemona, talking to Cassio about Othello's agitation, says that some such concern as matters of state must have "puddled his clear spirit." (III, iv, 140.) For in such cases (we would call them hierarchically motivated) "Men's natures wrangle with inferior things,/Though great ones are their objects." In thus pleading for the emblematic, she puts heroically what Rhymer puts meanly. In effect, she says to the audience: "You, who have come here for tragic ennoblement, remember that Othello's tragic excess is noble." (Incidentally, our term "excess" here is used advisedly. The Greek word *hubris*, often used to designate the hero's "tragic flaw", is in many contexts translated "excess". Indeed, a river on the rampage is said to "hubrize", whereat we might relevantly recall Othello likening his mood to the violence of the "Pontick sea".)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from the fact that, if Cassio had wiped his beard with the handkerchief, as Iago lyingly said he had, then by the logic of the emotions, by the mad-magical-metaphysical principle of *falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus* (particularly when the supposed falsity involved a *one* that itself stood for an *all*), then this beard had by the same token obscenely scratched against Desdemona's cheek or pillow.

And, as projected absolutely, all culminated in a last despairing act of total loneliness. Hence Othello's suicide said, in the narrative terms for the defining of essence, that investment as so conceived is essentially reflexive; for this great male lover, surprisingly, goaded by a man, ends on an imagery of self-abuse, doing himself violence as, having seized "by the throat" a "circumcised dog," he "smote him thus," and thereby "threw a pearl away" that possessed a richness other than the tribal. So Othello is "beside himself," as he must be, for one portion of himself to slay the other, and as he was "in principle," when Iago had kneeled with him in joint vows of vengeance, a posture that was a lie, when considered rationalistically in terms of the intrigue only, but was profoundest truth, as regards its purely ritual design.

Thereafter, the play must be brought to a close swiftly. In a summarizing couplet, Othello will say, as regards the underlying design of the major theme: "the kiss, the kill; the kill, the kiss." Cassio, the second theme, will reaffirm the hierarchic motive in its purity: "For he was great of heart." And to Lodovico is entrusted the job of recapitulating the connotations generally: "O bloody period" . . . "the tragic loading of this bed" . . . "O Spartan dog" (for Iago is called a dog only a few lines after Othello's ingenious reference to another figure, a "circumcised dog," which the audience interpreted as an allusion to himself, had terminated startlingly in a twist of sense whereby the *allusion* could merge into an *act* here and now; and since he called this hypothetical figure a Turk, we might properly recall that Iago earlier, in banter with Desdemona, had referred to himself as a Turk) . . . "the fortunes of the Moor . . . succeed on you" . . . "the censure of this hellish villain" . . . "the time, the place, the torture" . . .

> *Myself will straight abroad, and to the state*
> *This heavy act with heavy heart relate.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

VI

Related Plays by Shakespeare

This essay is not complete. For present purposes, it need not be, since to some extent one can also illustrate a procedure by noting what is still needed. In the Dramatis Personae section, bulky as it became, we didn't abide by our requirements, in getting the full recipe for the characters and noting how they mesh. And the relation between potentials and actualizations of plot could have been considered throughout the play.

The first and fifth sections deal with topical matters that point beyond the work. The second seeks to meet the tests of discussion in terms of *kind*. The third and fourth stress internal analysis of particulars.

We try to treat of diction indirectly, when considering an author's general diplomacy of presentation. But insofar as even a thorough job of this sort would leave some important stylistic matters still untreated, perhaps a special section (as in Aristotle's *Poetics*) would be required. For instance, we found no place in this scheme to discuss that passage where Iago, interpreting to Roderigo Cassio's reverential conversation with Desdemona, remarks: "Didst thou not see her paddle with the palm of his hand? Didst not mark that?" Why "paddle" is so good there, I can't figure out; but it is certainly genius in its devil-Iago felicity. On the other hand, we could probably have included under a full treatment of potentials, the place where, after Othello has kissed Desdemona, Iago confides in an aside to the audience: "O! you are well tun'd now,/But I'll set down the pegs that make this music,/As honest as I am." Elsewhere Iago always builds up the potentials by stating explicitly what he intends to do. But at this point, using *imagery* rather than an *explicit statement* about his designs, he merely establishes the potential "in principle". He keeps things positively turned in the desired direction. But the dramatist would proceed too bluntly, without sufficient modulations into an act, if Iago here had stated exactly what he intended to do. This is a good illustration of a case where vague imagery is superior to clear ideas, in pointing the arrows. (Often novelists begin thus, when adumbrating a destiny. In the novel form, because of the slow developments possible to it, a much higher percentage of such potentials is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

admissible. But usually the Shakespearean kind of drama must point more "efficiently". And I believe this is the only case in the play where Iago states his designs in such purely "attitudinal" fashion.)

However, much of the stylistic element still not treated would fit well in a sixth section we would include, concerned with the respects in which the expressions of this play overlap upon the expressions in other plays by the same author.

For instance, do not our remarks on the ultimate interchangeability of Othello and Iago gain further support from the fact that, in *Titus Andronicus,* the figure of Aaron merges important aspects of the two? (Or, more accurately stated, the aspects have not yet been dissociated.) For there the black man is the villain: "this barbarous Moor,/This ravenous tiger, this accursed devil". He calls his own child "thick-lipp'd slave", as Roderigo called Othello "thick lips". He calls himself a "black dog", and at one place is referred to ironically as "pearl", in a speech that next animadverts to the "base fruit of his burning lust." We are told that "Aaron will have his soul black like his face." And the theme of the *handkerchief* seems here adumbrated gruesomely, in all that has to do with the lopping-off of *hands* (whereat, incidentally, we are reminded that, when we were first expecting Othello to ask Desdemona about the handkerchief, in a delay by a kind of semi-surprise, he says instead, "Give me your hand"). And when Marcus wipes the tongueless Lavinia's tears with a handkerchief, Titus refers to it as a "napkin". Such a cluster of details would require us eventually to look for a wider theory of terminology that included this work as well.

In the case of *Titus Andronicus,* the issue is complicated by scholars' doubts as to what portions of the work should be attributed to Shakespeare. But in considering the whole problem of hierarchy, as it came to a head in the speech on Othello's threatened loss of "occupation" if he lost Desdemona, we should examine, in *Troilus and Cressida,* Ulysses' speech on "the specialty of rule" (I, iii). Here, after having proceeded in the usual fashion, implicating "the heavens themselves, the planets, and this centre," in the human order, he concludes: "take but degree away," and "This chaos, when degree is suffocate,/Follows the choking" (surely no accidental recurrence of such topics as are

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

central to *Othello*). Again, Ulysses speaks of "appetite" as a "universal wolf" that "must make perforce a universal prey,/ And last eat up himself." Should we not here remember Iago's reference to "wolves in pride", or Emilia: "They are all but stomachs, and we all but food;/They eat us hungerly, and when they are full/They belch us"—while she refers to jealousy as "a monster/Begot upon itself, born of itself," thus in another way bringing us back to the theme of the reflexive. (Indeed, in the last analysis, what are we to make of the fact that the most perfect dramatic form *is* reflexive in nature, as things seem rounded out perfectly in ironic histories whereby the "enginer" is "hoist with his own petar"?)

But references to hierarchy, in such terms as we have been considering, remind us also of Menenius Agrippa's allegory at the beginning of *Coriolanus*: "There was a time when all the body's members/Rebell'd against the belly . . ."—whereat we are tossed back to *Titus Andronicus* again, in the reference to "Lucius, son to old Adronicus;/Who threats, in course of this revenge, to do/As much as ever Coriolanus did."

Or, we find cause to bring in *Measure for Measure*, which seems surprisingly much like *Othello*, in the kind of tension it exploits (the use of a sexually "virtuous" character to suggest prurient thoughts), Angelo in that case taking upon himself the burden of the audience's illicit suggestibility, and the Duke having somewhat the role of impresario which Iago had carried in the apportionment of the tasks in his play. Or, further, the ambiguities of the black man, as implicated in Iago, point back likewise to the Sonnets, where "black beauty" in a woman is celebrated with such agitation, in contrast with the poet's gallant delight in the love of a "fair" man.

Here is the area of speculation where "all the returns are not yet in." The purpose would be to go beyond the terminological integration of a single play, in search of an over-all motivational scheme that might account for the shifts from one work to another. I admit that here all tends to grow nebulous. I use the word deliberately, thinking of great gaseous masses out of which solid bodies presumably emerge. But we should keep peering into these depths too, the farthest reaches of our subject. For here must lie the ultimate secrets of man, as the symbol-using animal.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ROBERT GRAVES

Primrose and Periwinkle

In the Middle Ages the periwinkle was worn as a garland by men condemned to death.

She: Why have you led me here
To this lampless hall,
A place of despair and fear
Where blind things crawl?

He: Not I, but your complaint
Lodged by the riverside
That primrose scent grew faint
And desire died.

She: Kisses had lost virtue
As yourself must know;
I declared what, alas, was true
And still shall do so.

He: Mount, lady, this main stair
Where bandogs at the foot
Their crooked gilt teeth bare
Between jaws of soot.

She: I loathe them, how they stand
Like prick-eared spies.
Hold me fast by the hand;
I walk with closed eyes.

He: Primrose has periwinkle
As her mortal fellow:
Five leaves, blue and baleful,
Five of true yellow.

She: Overhead, but overhead,
Where would he take me?
My feet stumble for dread,
My wits forsake me.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He: Flight on flight, floor above floor,
In suspense of doom
To a locked secret door
And a white-walled room.

She: Love, have you the pass-word,
Or have you the key,
With a sharp naked sword
And wine to revive me?

He: Enter: here is starlight,
Here the state bed
Where your man lies for the night
With blue flowers garlanded.

She: Ah, the cool open window
Of this confessional!
With wine at my elbow,
And sword beneath the pillow,
I shall perfect all.

Prometheus

Close bound in a familiar bed
All night I tossed, rolling my head;
Now dawn returns in vain, for still
The vulture squats on her warm hill.

I am in love as giants are
That dote upon the evening star.
And this lank bird is come to prove
The intractability of love.

Yet still, with greedy eye half shut,
Rend the raw liver from its gut:
Feed, jealousy, do not fly away—
If she who fetched you also stay.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Darien

It is a poet's privilege and fate
To fall enamoured of the one Muse
Who variously haunts this island earth.

She was your mother, Darien,
And presaged by the darting halcyon bird
Would run green-sleeved along her ridges,
Treading the asphodel and heather-trees
With white feet bare.

Often at moonrise I had watched her go
And a cold shudder shook me
To see the curved blaze of her Cretan axe.
Averted her set face, her business
Not yet with me, long-striding,
She would ascend the peak and pass from sight.
But once at full moon, by the sea's verge,
I came upon her without warning.

Unrayed she stood, with long hair streaming
A cockle-shell cupped in her warm hands,
Her axe propped idly on a stone.

No awe possessed me, only a great grief;
Wanly she smiled, but would not lift her eyes
(As a young girl will greet the stranger).
I stood upright, a head taller than she.
'See who has come,' said I.

She answered: 'If I lift my eyes to yours
And our eyes marry, man, what then?
Will they engender my son Darien?
Swifter than wind, with straight and nut-brown hair,
Tall, slender-shanked, grey-eyed, untameable;
Never was born, nor ever will be born
A child to equal my son Darien,
Guardian of the hid treasures of your world.'

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I knew then by the trembling of her hands
For whom that flawless blade would sweep:
My own oracular head, swung by its hair.

'Mistress,' I cried, 'the times are evil
And you have charged me with their remedy.
O, where my head is now, let nothing be
But a clay counterfeit with nacre blink:
Only look up, so Darien may be born.

'He is the northern star, the spell of knowledge,
Pride of all hunters and all fishermen,
Your deathless fawn, an eaglet of your eyrie,
The topmost branch of your unfellable tree.
A tear streaking the summer night,
The new green of my hope.' Lifting her eyes,
She held mine for a lost eternity.
'Sweetheart,' said I, 'strike now, for Darien's sake!'

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SERGEI EISENSTEIN

The Birth of a Film[1]

IT IS GENERALLY KNOWN THAT the film *Potemkin* was born from a half-page of the enormous scenario of *1905*, that Nina Ferdinandovna Agadzhanova and I wrote in the summer of 1925.

In the files of "creative archives" one occasionally stumbles upon this sedulous giant, that greedily sucked into its countless pages the whole wide flood of the events of 1905. Nothing was omitted—even if it had to be mentioned in passing, or compressed into two lines! Look and wonder: how could two people, not devoid of discrimination, both having had some professional experience—how could they for a moment have believed that all this could be staged and filmed? And all in a single film, too!

And then one begins to see all this from a different viewpoint—and it immediately appears clear that "this" was not, essentially, a scenario. It was a huge working note-book, a gigantic abstract of concentrated, painstaking work on an epoch—a means of familiarizing oneself with the character and spirit of the time—an attempt to grasp the dynamics and face of the epoch, its rhythms, the inner relationships linking its various events. To be brief, without this vast preliminary abstract, the feeling of 1905 could not have been poured into the episode of the *Potemkin*. Only after absorbing all this, only when he found himself living and breathing it all, could a director make from such brief phrases as "The battleship, without a shot, passes through the squadron," or "The canvas is thrown over those condemned to death," scenes that move one unexpectedly, to the continuing wonder of film historians.

It was possible to transform line after line of the scenario into scene after scene of the film because one depended not on the hasty notes of the libretto, but on that whole complex of feelings

[1]This memoir was written in 1945, for the 20th birthday of *Potemkin*, but was left unpublished by the author; its first publication was in *Iskusstvo Kino*, No. 4, 1950; three passages omitted in the published Russian text have been supplied by an English translation printed in the *Voks Bulletin*.—*Trans.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

which brought into view, as living images, those fugitive facts I had lived with so long. This permitted us, without straying from the feeling of truth, to develop any part of our idea, absorbing therein whatever phenomena related to it, scenes not in the libretto (the Odessa steps), details unforeseen by anyone (the mists in the scene of mourning).

Agadzhanova, however, did far more for me than I have indicated: she brought me through the revolutionary past into the revolutionary present. Among intellectuals who came to the revolution after 1917 there was an unavoidable stage—"I" and "they"—before these fused in a comprehension of the Soviet revolutionary "we." I was firmly helped in making this transition by the tiny, blue-eyed, timid, infinitely modest and beloved Nune[2] Agadzhanova. And for this I am eternally grateful to her.

I

In order to make a film about a battleship one needs—a battleship.

And to reconstruct the history of a 1905 battleship, it must be of exactly that type used in 1905.

In the passage of twenty years,—for we were in the summer of 1925,—the appearance of naval vessels had emphatically changed. Neither in the Gulf of Finland, among the vessels of the Baltic Fleet, nor in the Black Sea Fleet could we locate that summer a battleship of the required type. Merrily riding the Sevastopol roadstead was an old cruiser—but she wouldn't do. She did not have the peculiar broad crupper, nor the necessary expanse of quarterdeck—the parade-ground for that celebrated drama we had to reconstruct. . .

The *Potemkin* herself had been knocked apart many years before, and no one even knew where the winds of history had scattered and swept those sheets of heavy armor that had once covered her mighty flanks.

Our scouts reported that if we could not trace the *Prince Potemkin of Tauride,* a friend and kinsman of the same class still lived: the mighty, courageous battleship, *The Twelve Apostles.*

[2]"Nune" is the Armenian pronunciation of "Nina."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Chained to the rocky shore, attached to the sea-floor with iron flukes, her sometime heroic carcass stood in one of the most remote of the many winding inlets. Here in deep caves, where the coves wound into the entrails of the mountain, hundreds, thousands of mines were stored. At the entrance to these caves, a vigilant Cerberus, lay the oblong, rusting gray body of *The Twelve Apostles.* But no longer visible on her was armored turret or mast or flagstaff or captain's bridge—nearly everything had been stripped from the broad back of this slumbering guardian whale.

Now and then the many tiers of her iron belly rumbled, echoing the clatter of trucks that trundled back and forth the heavy, lethal contents of its metal ventricles: mines, mines, mines. . . . For the body of *The Twelve Apostles* was also a storehouse for mines. That is why she was so firmly anchored, rooted to solidity: a mine is not pleased by jolts, a mine shuns any sort of shaking, a mine demands utter immobility and calm. . . .

* * *

It would seem that *The Twelve Apostles* was doomed to eternal immobility, like the twelve stone images of Christ's disciples that frame the portals of Romanesque churches; these are no grayer, no more immobile, weather-beaten and pock-marked by the inclemencies of time than the iron nave, the iron cathedral half sunk in the silent waters of that Sevastopol cove.

But the iron whale was fated once more to be awakened.

Once more her flanks were to stir.

Once more her nose, seemingly forever grounded against a cliff, was to be pointed toward the open sea.

The battleship now stood parallel to the high crags of the shore.

But the "drama on the quarterdeck" had occurred at sea. Neither from the side nor from the prow of the battleship could the cameraman point his camera without having for background the tall vertical blackness of the cliffs.

The keen eye of the director's assistant, Lyosha Kriukov, who had ferreted out the old iron hulk in the windings of the Sevastopol roadstead, found a way to overcome this difficulty. By swinging about her mighty body ninety degrees, the vessel stood away perpendicularly from the shore, so that her front, taken from the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

prow, appeared exactly opposite a fissure in the surrounding cliffs and showed clear sky around the whole breadth of her sides! It really looked as though the battleship rode the open sea.[3]

All around her flew astonished sea-gulls, accustomed to the battleship as to another craggy ledge—and their flight doubled the illusion. In uneasy silence rolled the iron whale.

* * *

By special order of the commander of the Black Sea Fleet the iron giant was once more, for the last time, turned with her nose pointing seawards. And it really seemed that she inhaled the sunny sea air with extended open nostrils, after the stagnant air of the muddy anchorage.

Slumbering in her belly, the mines probably noticed nothing as the massive body was swung smoothly around.

But the bangs of our axes must have disturbed their sleep: on the deck of the real battleship was raised the super-structure of a plywood battleship—with laths, beams and plywood; and by using the old plans preserved in the archives of the Admiralty, the exact outer appearance of the battleship *Potemkin* was reconstructed.

One can almost see in this a symbol of the film itself: on a basis of real history the past was reconstructed by means of art. . . .

* * *

Not a jot of leeway to the right or left.

Not one centimetre to the side!

Or the illusion of "open sea" would be shattered. The gray cliffs would slyly slip before the lens.

Spatial blinkers held us in rigid limits.

No less rigid were the blinkers of time: our deadline was the night of the jubilee at which the finished film was to be shown, and this permitted little rambling of the fancy.

Chains and anchors held the old body of the battleship in check to prevent her rushing back to the sea. The fetters of space and the anchor of time checked excessive tangents of invention.

---

[3]There *is* in the film one shot of the battleship from afar—but this shot was made in the Sandunovsky Baths, in Moscow. A tiny gray model of the battleship was launched in the warm waters of the pool.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And it may have been this very factor that gave severity and harmony to the style of the finished film.

* * *

Mines—mines—mines—

No wonder they constantly roll out from under this pen onto the page. All work proceeded under The Sign of The Mine.

Smoking was forbidden.

Running was forbidden.

Even to be on deck without good reason was forbidden!

And the most fearsome mine, especially placed among them, was their watchman—Comrade Glazastikov! "Glazastikov" [literally: Sharp-eyed] was no play on words. His name—alas!—expressed the full character of this unsleeping eye, this Argus, guarding the tiers of mines below-decks from sparks, from needless jolting, from detonation. . . .

To unload the mines would have taken months, and all we then had was two weeks in which to finish the shooting in time to show the film at the jubilee.

Under such conditions try to film a revolt!

However,—"All obstacles are vain before Russians," Tolstoy's partisan said; the revolt was filmed!

But something was taken from those mines rolling in the belly of the old battleship, and jumping as the reconstructed piece of history rushed across her deck. Their explosive power was somehow transferred to film and to the screen. . . . The screen image of this old rebel caused no little unrest among the censors, policemen and police-spies of many European countries. No less did it stir revolt in the depths of cinema esthetics.

II

Spectators are always interested, not only in the participants in the event shown on the screen, but also in the real participants in the film. Here are some brief data on a few of these.

One of the very important roles for the story was that of the ship's surgeon. We searched long for someone to play it, hopelessly, and at last settled on a compromise candidate, a certain actor.

This not quite suitable candidate rode with our filming group in the little cutter toward the cruiser *Komintern,* where the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

episode of the maggotty meat was to be filmed. I sat pouting at the far end of the cutter, as far as possible from the "surgeon", deliberately refusing to glance in his direction.

The details of the port of Sevastopol were familiar enough to set one's teeth on edge. The faces of the production-crew, too.

I looked over the day-laborers who had been hired to hold the mirrors and gauzes during the filming. Among them was an especially feeble-looking man. He was the furnace-man at the draughty, chilly Sevastopol hotel where we killed time when we weren't shooting. "Now why should they pick such feeble fellows to work with the heavy mirrors," the thought lazily wandered through my head. "He's sure to drop a mirror overboard. Or worse—break it. And that would be a bad sign. . . ."

At this point my thoughts came to a halt: the feeble furnace-man had unexpectedly leaped on to another plane of value—from the viewpoint of his physical laboring capacities to the viewpoint of expressive capacities: mustache tendrils and sharp little goatee . . . crafty eyes. . . . Mentally I covered them with the glasses of a pince-nez on a chain. Mentally I exchanged his greasy cap for the officer's cap of the ship's surgeon. . . .

As soon as we reached the deck to begin filming, these thoughts were brought to life: squinting meanly through the two lenses of a pince-nez as he looked at the wormy meat was the ship's surgeon of the battleship *Potemkin,* recently a day-laborer.

* * *

There's a legend that I played the role of the priest in the film. That isn't true. The priest was played by an old gardener from one of the orchards outside Sevastopol. He played the role in his own white beard, combed slightly to the side, and a bushy white wig.

The legend derives from a "production still" taken while a beard was being gummed on my face and after I had dressed in the wig and cassock of the role. I was being made-up to double for him: the respectable old man was supposed to fall down a companion-ladder. The camera was to be behind him during the fall. And I could not refuse myself the satisfaction of "personally" performing this *cascade!*[4]

[4]And the gardener apparently anticipated less satisfaction from this part of the priest's role.—*Trans.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

* * *

A very essential participant also remains anonymous. As essential as he was he remained outside the shots. And Heaven be praised that he was not so much a participant as he was a furious opponent of the making our film.

This was the guard at the Alupka Palace grounds. His ancient splayed boots and droopy trousers very nearly got onto film, for he stubbornly sat on the head of one of the Alupka marble lions, refusing to let us film it without written permission.

In this crisis we were saved by the fact that there are *six* lions on the Alupka steps. As we ran with the camera from lion to lion, we finally so confused this grim and short-witted guardian of order that at last he disposed of the problem with a flourish of his hand, and let us take the close-ups of the three marble lions that we wanted.

These "roused lions" were a "find on the spot"—at Alupka, where we had gone to rest on one of our "lost" days.

* * *

Also "found on the spot" were—those famous mists.

There was a foggy morning in the harbor. It seemed literally cotton-wool that floated on the mirror surface of the harbor-waters. And if *Swan Lake* were ever performed not in the Odessa Theatre, but amidst the cranes and unloading platforms of the port, one could imagine that diaphanous garments floated there, left behind when the white swan-maidens soared away....

The actuality was more prosaic: fog over the harbor meant a Black Friday on our shooting schedule—another "lost" day. And these "Black Fridays" sometimes occurred seven times a week.

And now, despite all the white fluff, we had something to do on such a lost Black Friday. The black bones of the cranes thrust their skeletons through the orange-blossom bridal robes of fog. And the black torsos of skiffs, barges and merchant-ships resembled behemoths, wallowing in muslin. Down through the tousled lint of the fog, here and there, pierced the rare filament of sun-beams, casting gilded-rosy dapplings on the fluff. And the fog seemed warm and alive. And then the sun too would draw a veil of clouds about itself, as if envious of its own reflection in the sea, mantled in the swan's-down of mist: "Am I, pray, less beautiful?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

However this may be—no filming. Lost.

Boats were for rent at 3 rubles, 50 kopeks. With Tisse and Alexandrov I rode about the waters of the fog-bound harbor, as through an endless orchard of flowering apple trees. "Three men in a boat . . ."

Our camera, like an old hound, was always with us. It was counting (as were we) on a rest today. But the restless urge of the three to be doing something forced the camera out into the fog. The fog stuck to the surface of the lens like cotton-wool in the teeth. "Such things just *aren't* filmed," the cog-wheels inside the camera seemed to murmur to each other. Their attitude was seconded by ironic laughter, coming through the fog:

"What eccentrics!"

It was L., photographing another film there in Odessa, who was laughing at us.[5] His lanky, scraggy, Don Quixotic figure was lazily draped over the bow of another boat. Emerging from the fog and sliding back into it, exactly like a fade-out, he threw at us in passing his ironic best wishes for success.

And his wishes for our success were realized.

From the shots made that morning, accidentally achieving an emotionally unified body of materials out of the approaching, passing, receding objects in the misted harbor, came the raw material for funereal plastic chords, whose reciprocal montage, in a cunning interlacing on the cutting-table, later formed a largo in memory of Vakulinchuk.

This was the least expensive day's work of the entire expedition: the motor-boat rented for the trip round the harbor cost a total of 3 rubles, 50 kopeks.

III

The third find on the spot was the Odessa steps.

I believe that nature, circumstances, the setting at the moment of shooting, and the filmed material itself at the moment of montage, can sometimes be wiser than author and director.

To be able to hear distinctly and to understand what is suggested by the "location" or by factors that were unforeseen in

[5]The laughing cameraman may have been Levitzky, then working in Odessa on *Cross and Mauser*.—*Trans.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

forming your ideas for the setting, to be able to listen attentively to what is said by the montage pieces, the scenes put together to live their plastic life on the screen of the projection-room, and which occasionally reach far beyond the limits set by their inventors,—this is a great blessing and a great art.

It requires that the creative individuality be humble and modest to the point of self-effacement.

Nor is this all. There is yet another requirement. Extraordinary precision is demanded in the over-all creative intention for the given scene or phase of the film-production. And there must be just as much elasticity in choosing the particular means for embodying the idea.

It is necessary to be somewhat pedantic, in order to know fully the nature of the desired "tone", and to be no less free-thinking in order not to reject the perhaps unforseen object and means that is capable of embodying that tone.

My notes show that the tone I required was the precise degree of accent to precede the cannonade from the battleship at the Odessa steps. A sketch of these means was in the rough work script.

An accident brought a sharper and stronger decision than had been planned, but the accident was so in key with the body of the film that it developed roots there and could not be removed.

Among the director's notes are ten pages of a treatment of the mourning for Vakulinchuk, attached to slowly passing details of the harbor. But in taking these details, floating pensively through the accidentally foggy day, their emotional tone was found to fit exactly the first concept of the funeral—and the unforeseen mists had now grown into the core of our idea.

In the same way the bit episodes had at first been assembled, developing the harshness of the Cossack reprisals through various ascending stages (on the street, in a printshop courtyard, on the outskirts of the city, in front of a bakery) into one monumental flight of stairs, the steps of which were to serve as rhythmic and dramatic links for the victims of the tragedy, scattered about the steps.

No scene of shooting on the Odessa steps appeared in any of the preliminary versions or in any of the montage lists that were prepared. It was born in the instant of immediate contact.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The anecdote about the idea for this scene being born as I watched the bouncing from step to step of the cherry pits I spat out while standing at the top, beneath the Duke's monument, is, of course, a myth—very colorful, but a downright myth. It was the very *movement* of the steps that gave birth to the idea of the scene, and with its "flight" roused the fantasy of the director to a new "spiraling". And it would seem that the panicky *rush* of the crowd, "flying" down the steps,—is no more than a materialization of those first feelings on seeing this staircase.

And, too, it is possible that this was helped by some looming from the womb of memory, some illustration in a magazine of 1905—a horseman on a staircase veiled in smoke, slashing someone with a sabre. . . .

Be that as it may, the Odessa steps became the decisive scene at the very spine of the film.

* * *

Furnace-man, mists, steps—all these only duplicated the fate of the film as a whole: itself born from a rib of the endlessly long scenario of *1905*, embracing an infinite quantity of events.

It must be confessed that the sun does not drop in to tea with me, as it would with Vladimir Mayakovsky. But it occasionally gives unexpected service. As in 1938, when it generously stayed with us for forty days in a row, while we filmed the Battle on the Ice near the Mosfilm Studios, for *Alexander Nevsky*.

And it commandingly compelled us to pack up the expedition we had taken to Leningrad where we had tardily begun in 1925 the filming of *1905*. And it sent us chasing its last rays of summer in Odessa and Sevastopol, for we were forced to choose, from the multiplicity of episodes in the scenario, only those that could be filmed in the south.

And so one of many episodes became the emotional embodiment of the 1905 epos as a whole.

The part replaced the whole.

And absorbed into itself the emotional image of the whole.

How was this possible?

The re-comprehension of the function of the close-up from an informative detail into a specific property, capable of rousing the senses of the spectator to a consciousness of the whole, is attached in many ways to this film.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For example: the pince-nez are required at one point to become a substitute for their wearer—the dangling pince-nez take the place of the surgeon, at that moment floundering in the seaweed, after the sailors' revenge.

I have compared[6] this use of the close-up to what in poetics is known as the synecdoche. Elsewhere[7] I have shown that this depends directly on our habituated capacity to reproduce the whole in the perception and feelings, through the represented part.

When, however, is this phenomenon artistically possible? When is the part, the particular, the partial episode thoroughly capable of replacing the whole? Solely, of course, in those cases when the part, the particular, partial episode is—typical. That is, when the whole is concentrated in it, as the whole sky is reflected in a drop of dew.

The image of the surgeon and his little goatee, with his feeble eyes and short-sighted improvidence, is stored away (and the image is fully equipped with arms and legs, as well) in the characteristic detail of the pince-nez, and a whole image of the 1905 period is held like a fox-terrier by that delicate metal chain, looped over the ear.

Exactly thus did the episode of revolt on the *Potemkin* absorb in a purely historical way into its "story" an infinite number of events that are profoundly characteristic of that "dress rehearsal for October". The tainted meat expands into a symbol of the inhuman conditions in which not only the army and navy were kept, but also the exploited "army of labor". The scene on the quarterdeck absorbed into itself the typical brutality with which the Tzarist régime crushed every attempt at protest, wherever, whenever, however it arose. And this scene also included, no less typical of 1905, the response of those who were commanded to punish the rebels. The refusal to fire at the crowd, into the mass, at people, at their brothers—this is characteristic of the atmosphere of 1905, and is recorded in the history of many military units thrown by authority into the suppression of rebellion. The mourning over the body of Vakulinchuk is an echo of innumerable instances when the funerals of victims flamed into demon-

[6]See *Film Form*, pp. 133-134.—*Trans.*
[7]See *The Film Sense*, pp. 11-36.—*Trans.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

strations and became the pretexts for more violent clashes and reprisals. The scene over the body of Vakulinchuk embodied the feelings and destinies of those who carried the body of Baumann through Moscow in their arms. The scene on the steps absorbed into itself the Baku slaughter as well as that of January 9, when the "trusting crowd", made happy by the spring air of freedom, was mercilessly trampled by the boots of reaction, and that of the savage burning of the meeting in the Tomsk theatre by the unbridled "black hundreds" of the pogromists.

And finally, the film concludes with the decisive and victorious passage of the battleship through the Admiral's squadron, and on this major chord the action of the film breaks off, another image of the 1905 Revolution. We know the further fate of this historic battleship: she was interned at Constanta, and later returned to the Tzarist government. Some of the sailors escaped. But Matyushenko, fallen into the hands of the Tzarist hangmen, was executed. . . .

However, the screen descendant of this battleship achieves, correctly, a victorious end. For just so the revolution of 1905, though bathed in blood, runs into the channel of revolutionary history, primarily as a phase of the historical victor, as the great harbinger of the ultimate triumphs of October. And through this victorious image of defeat, we see in full pathos the role of the great events of 1905, among which was the fact of the *Potemkin* —no more than a particular episode, but exactly that one in which the magnitude of the whole could be reflected.

IV

Let's go back to the participants and the anonymous. . . .

Nearly all the participants in the film were unknown and nameless, except for Vakulinchuk, played by the actor Antonov, Gilyarovsky, played by Grigori Alexandrov, Captain Golikov, played by the late director Barsky, yes, and the boatswain Levchenko, whose whistle was such a help to our work.

What were the fates of those hundreds of anonymous persons who so enthusiastically came into the film, and with tireless zeal ran in the oppressive heat from top to bottom of the steps, and filed endlessly along the breakwater in the funeral ceremony?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Most of all would I like to meet that nameless child who rode in the perambulator that jumped from step to step in its flight down the stairway.

He must be twenty now. . . . Where is he? What is he doing? Did he defend Odessa? Or is he lying in one of those mass-graves far from the Liman? Or is he working in reborn Odessa?

* * *

And I can still remember some of the names of those people who ran down the steps. But there's something behind this. In directorial practice there is something called "the Bonaparte method." We know how Napoleon questioned his soldiers about *their comrades and would later astonish a man with his information* on the man's domestic affairs: "Louison, how is your fiancée?" "And how are your relatives getting along—good old Rosalie and that hard-working Thibault—outside St. Tropez?" "Is your aunt Justine getting over her gout?" . . .

. . . The crowd hurries down the steps. More than two thousand legs run down those steps. First time—all right. Second time—already less energetic. The third time is even lazy.

Suddenly from the camera-tower, over all the stamping feet and scraping shoes and sandals, the brass-throated admonitory shout of the director can be heard through the shining megaphone:

"Comrade Prokopenko, couldn't you do it more energetically?" . . .

In an instant the whole mass is struck dumb: "Is it possible that each of us can be seen from that cursed tower? Does that director really have the eyes of an Argus to watch how each of us runs? Does he really know each of us by face and name?"

And in a wild new rush of energy they all hurry faster downwards, fully convinced that nothing escapes the never-closing eye of the director-demiurge.

But the director had only shouted through his shining megaphone a name that he happened to know belonged to one of the people on the steps.

* * *

Among the thousands of anonymous participants in the film, there is one that stands in a class by itself.

This anonymous entity created a disturbance that reached

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

international dimensions—and actually caused a debate in the German Reichstag.

This anonymous thing was the fleet shown as the Admiral's squadron moving towards the *Potemkin* at the end of the film.

This fleet was large and formidable. And far superior to the ships at the disposal of the young Soviet state in 1925.

Hence the feverish anxiety of our German neighbor.

Result: a debate in the Reichstag as to the actual size of our fleet.

Fear has big eyes. Their eyes, dilated in fright, overlooked the detail that the long shots of the advancing squadron had been pieced together from old newsreels of naval manoeuvres—not even of the Russian fleet, but that of a certain foreign power.

* * *

And here the time comes to do justice to the anonymous chief —no longer an anonymous participant, but an anonymous creator—

to our great Russian people,

to its heroic revolutionary past,

and to its great inspiration that inexhaustibly nourishes the creativeness of our artists and craftsmen.

[*translated by Jay Leyda*]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SAUL BELLOW

Address by Gooley MacDowell to the Hasbeens Club of Chicago

Fellows: There have been rumors running concerning me, some funny and some two-sided, and some old ones, getting boring. I am not always against bores; I used to argue that they should be sacred, like strangers and lunatics in the simpler societies, because they keep the mysteries at the right depth; but I realize that this position overlooks great dangers. However, there's the rumor again that I'm going to marry, which is nothing but a joke on my appearance and personal neglect of years. There's a rumor that *People's Gas* wants to make me personnel director—I'm used to that one, too. And then there's this new thing, that the Nobel committee wants to start a prize for general, secular intelligence or leading laymanship, and that I'm top candidate from the Middle-west. This is some satire that people think I'm beginning to lose my edge, and with perhaps a hum of sadness to it that I'm a little calcified and the blood supply to my head is not so swift as once—when, say, I first failed in business, first got married, first became a Unitarian. But it is not a well-planned joke. It overlooks my loss to the Hasbeens, should I get that famous money; and, also, that having the reverse Midas touch, all the gold I ever came in contact with having turned into something less universally desired, I wouldn't bring the Nobels anything but peril, wearing their medal.

But this joke about my falling off aims right, though physical deterioration is not what I believe to be back of it. Only, what I have been saying in bits and drabbles has waked that suspicion, so that now I will try to report my changed views or new doubts.

It's true, fellows, that I used to be very intelligent, and now don't know but what I should give it up. I seen too many hard times, and these days I've been starting to reconsider to what end I hoped to be so smart.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Kindness sent me forward and I got praise from the first. What is there better for learning? My mother put up my exercise books in ribbons. My long dress teachers, in the mud and shack days of this town, gave me encouragement and I sprung my elbow waving to answer questions; and later on, with intelligence tests and so forth, I was up amongst the brightest apes, and have no doubt but that I would have conquered a box of Milky Ways from Professor I. Q. had the times been more advanced. But I did my best. I set much store by correspondence schools, where there were cerebellar doctors in the picture; the more confident in them if they had log-cabins drawn in behind them, and ploughs and lonesome prairie, and now were qualified to rise up to a point of information in the thick of intellectual Boston about Lycurgus or Pitt the Younger, or which birds fly longest in migration. It was so, in the hard-collar and wisely-bearded photos of these men in the back pages of magazines where they advertised, that you could see the close weave of brain back of their eyes, like the reward of gazing into radio tubes—pardon, germanium crystal diodes of thought-machines—to examine the secret of their potency. And furthermore, when I was a young bachelor I was put wise to Herbert Spencer, the great practical man, with snap-purse lips and head economized of all hair and wrinkles, cleared as if for the smoother work of brain. I was in favor of all he proposed, even, for a moment, of his plan for the painless execution of criminals. Who remembers that piece of kindness? A centrifuge wheel: bind your murderer to it, start him spinning slowly and then accelerate until he dies by anemia of the brain. True capital punishment, humaner than rope, and also more noble or Copernican that society should punish into the head and by a law of motion that also rules in the stars. Yes, yes, in all the departments of life it was intelligence connected to human advancement. You might not have thought well of big money, but nevertheless there was the capacity of the Wall Street man and his major brain, displacing so much black water of finance with ticking calculations, making head into Europe and China. And as the wizard with flashing synapses rose on the world, the engineers went forward—Mr. Goethals, Mr. Eiffel, the makers of industrial bread, Mr. Sullivan raised the Monadnock Building here, Mr. Roosevelt, the first, sat in a white suit at the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

controls of a steam shovel in the Panama Canal, voices came out of the telephone, the country and earth filled with light forced up from Menlo Park, the front of life coruscated, the Dying Gaul was promoted to be Rodin's Thinker, a higher immolation, with his fist to his forehead—as all this happened, what was it to be wondered at that clever young fellows were wetting a finger to turn pages and set themselves ahead? As, today, the International Business Machine Company in its showroom on Michigan Boulevard prints THINK! on its walls with identical inspiration.

Now I see some of my friends putting out a foxy jaw of skepticism about me, and I know they have in reserve the memory of my little pamphlets on T. H. Huxley and my Haldeman-Julius Kansas bluebook *Evolution and Mind* with foreword by Clarence Darrow; or else my long association with the Yellow Kid whose financial genius was of such interest to the State Prosecutor and courts of Illinois, a man of great intellectual refinement. And also the fact that for years I have had the same seat, more formal than the stock exchange, under the portrait of M. le duc D'Aumale wearing his noble knickers, this clean and rational French gentleman, in the science reading-room of the Crerar, or our homespun Bodleian. They will want to know why I have it in for thought, suddenly. To them I say—Archie, Boggs, you boys—there's an interesting explanation coming, that I'm not preparing to say I'm p.o. with reason and brain.

How is any man going to account for having closed up in his head, above his teeth and palate and below his hair, what there is? This folding! This isthmus! This finding! That baroque pearl of an inmost thing! You think I'm not in awe of it? Why, here's this earth, chained down of mountains where I sway, in its silk buffets of atmosphere; here's the rooster breaking into peaks of day, while the clucks are his base, the pecking and the fostering of the eggs: the relation of the brain and other organs is what I mean. And isn't it maybe the curiosity over these internal discoveries that leads us to have captive animals—eagles in the park, canaries at home? We keep pets within and without. Imprisoned power. The heart in its cage of bone. I had goldfish myself, in the days of my victrola shop, and loved the bulge-eyed blackies so swift after flies.

This, about pets and mascots, is not so far from the subject,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

inasmuch as we are in the habit of regarding and considering ourselves no matter which direction we look. Is that something to surprise us? It's in the book of rules among the first and commonest of human things, and it doesn't have to be as disagreeable as it's become. But no debate, either, that it has become so, and tiresome, a complication from what was a process, and thereby makes mathematics and physics a comfort. For there it seems surest that you're not talking about yourself. In fact they probably wouldn't have developed so far, these sciences, in a less selfish age. Because this kind of consciousness can be like sharing a bed with a pal who is running a high fever, and at last you would rather shake down on the hard floor of fact, where no humanity is, in the fair cool space of vectors and the topless tent of laws, open to the universe. That's for removal from the burning *me*. And why should it be so? Fellows, there's a question!

What, Mr. President, and you others, do you think I'm turning into a Jack Cade, enraged with people who don't sign themselves with crosses, or a Know Nothing, and out to tear down the flag of *cogito;* or that pretty soon I'm going to break out with old arguments—Bishop Berkeley rocks, Paley watches? Even the latest about Percy Lowell's planet that should have been there by mathematics but didn't show up for its appointment ever? Not I. At last even Dr. Skinner's little pigeons who play ping-pong or pick out Annie Laurie on the piano can be justified in my sight, though my willingness is slow here and would be even if they played the Moonlight Sonata, for I think of Noah's messengers coming up from Ararat with little leaves. But, *grosso modo,* I give my okay because of the sublimity of the greater enterprise. Only it's in another direction I'm looking today, of thought in the singular and personal, and what you manage by it.

Around our heads we have a dome of thought as thick as atmosphere to breathe. And what's about? One thought leads to another as breath leads to breath. I find it barren just to breathe or only to have thoughts. By pulling into universal consciousness, can explain everything from Democritus to Bikini? But a person can no longer keep up, and plenty are dying of good ideas. We have them in the millions, in compilations, from the *Zend Avesta* to now, all on file with the best advice for any and all human occasions. What a load you can buy for a buck, in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

anthologies, out of Augustine, Pascal, Aristotle, Nicholas of Cusa, super-brain Goethe, and it's a confusion for us. Look at us, deafened, hampered, obstructed, impeded, impaired and bowel-glutted with wise counsel and good precept, and the more plentiful our ideas the worse our headaches. So we ask, will some good creature pull out the plug and ease our disgusted hearts a little? We are not free to use it, that is why the advice is a loaded burden. What's the laugh on Polonius, if not just in that? And, besides, is my heart going to authorize me in this day to play chivalry and Roland, or Roman senator or good bishop? And if a good idea isn't also a law of the body, then what is it to us? There was the Mahatma in his baken-earth backyard one day, in Africa, striving with his wife that she didn't carry the chamber-pots of strangers with a willing enough pleasure. Now if you're looking for the pattern of the foundation of new great things, this man and wife bicker is what to start with; and when my soul feels its privations, and the cut-end branches of inclinations that were not allowed, I also say a knowledge to be true must be confirmed or arrive with a happiness, and we're a little thin on that side, too.

Now I awoke this fine summer morning with a fly bustling in the hairs of my foot, and went to spit in the sink of my hall-bedroom in the house belonging to my brother's widow, and heard the steam of the tailor pressing below, and had a gander at the say-nothing tragedian clouds upstairs of me. Then the question rose in me, "Gooley, what is the score, you poor-man's Socrates? What is the pay-off of your devoted studies?" And I saw that I could not stand any more self-improvement originating in thought. And just a note here is necessary, that as you get better by the correction of intellect you may lose your nature, and have less and less to say because what your nature prompts your betterness turns down, so you become silent and are otherwise in danger of becoming better than you can afford. As, also, there is an acquaintance with thought whose widening cannot be stopped because the question of what it is that you yourself believe only forces you faster after what has been said, and soon that saying is all, and the record everything.

While as to being dry on the chaos waves by the management and steering of wit, haven't we taken care of that in our charter, declaring nobody can trust knowing the angles to obtain salva-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion? Intelligent? What for, you subject-man and personal ant, when you're so much at the mercy and soldered up inside determinations? Intelligence is the brillo of the brave! and slaveys when they scour with it shine up a disappointed face; and then what a moment on the bottom of the pot. And can you, ambitious to think the deepest penetration into manhood, tell me what effectively rules in your life and how much you are, at sixty, still your mother's and your father's child, not unfastened from that close happiness, swaying from it still with a lifted upper body like the tit-footed caterpillar? And how much great and vast sense there is to be waked up in your last years from that almost lifelong state? (Not to lose love nor yet be prevented from clear thought, is what I intend to say.) Or also what things happened, seeming neither intrinsic nor even called-for: what have these done to you, what have they made of you? And I must ask, when I see these many, ignorant of their others, and fearful, and faithless of happiness: how wise and clever must you become to be well, and what kind of specialist to stand even average among so many hard griefs and difficult bafflements, when even to be decent needs heroism? What education is misery, that now is the main teacher, or the word of intelligence to human cookery and soap-manufacture? Why, then, I feel compelled to admit it seems only natural for people to confine themselves in the far corner from the largest power of their minds, which may come and whiff after them like the elephant after its peanut, and lose them in its huge digestion.

Nevertheless, I'm still in doubt and not ready yet to draw all my hopes out of the old deposited account. Except I see there are feelings of being that go beyond and beyond all I ever knew of thought, and a massiver existence of man that comes to question even in me, who was so easily hammerlocked in the first trial-grips of my life. And have the sense, as well, that there is always a furthest creature that wears various lives or forms as a garment, and the life of thought as one of the greatest of these.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LECONTE DE LISLE

Le Coeur de Hialmar

Une nuit claire, un vent glacé. La neige est rouge.
Mille braves sont là qui dorment sans tombeaux,
L'épée au poing, les yeux hagards. Pas un ne bouge.
Au-dessus tourne et crie un vol de noirs corbeaux.

La lune froide verse au loin sa pâle flamme.
Hialmar se soulève entre les morts sanglants,
Appuyé des deux mains au tronçon de sa lame.
La pourpre du combat ruisselle de ses flancs.

Holà! Quelqu'un a-t-il encore un peu d'haleine,
Parmi tant de joyeux et robustes garçons
Qui, ce matin, riaient et chantaient à voix pleine
Comme des merles dans l'épaisseur des buissons?

Tous sont muets. Mon casque est rompu, mon armure
Est trouée, et la hache a fait sauter ses clous.
Mes yeux saignent. J'entends un immense murmure
Pareil aux hurlements de la mer ou des loups.

Viens par ici, Corbeau, mon brave mangeur d'hommes!
Ouvre-moi la poitrine avec ton bec de fer.
Tu nous retrouveras demain tels que nous sommes.
Porte mon coeur tout chaud à la fille d'Ylmer.

Dans Upsal, où les Jarls boivent la bonne bière,
Et chantent, en heurtant les cruches d'or, en choeur,
A tire d'aile vole, ô rôdeur de bruyère!
Cherche ma fiancée et porte-lui mon coeur.

Au sommet de la tour que hantent les corneilles
Tu la verras debout, blanche, aux longs cheveux noirs.
Deux anneaux d'argent fin lui pendent aux oreilles,
Et ses yeux sont plus clairs que l'astre des beaux soirs.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

translated by
RICHMOND LATTIMORE

Hjalmar

A clear night and a frozen wind. Blood on the snow.
A thousand fighting men who all unburied lie
with sword in fist and hollow eyes. None stirs, although
above them ravens in black circles wheel and cry.

The cold moon scatters into distance her pale flares.
Hjalmar heaves himself up among the bleeding dead
propped with both hands upon a broken sword, and wears
the battle color on his flanks awash with red.

Hola! And is there one left among all those boys
so strong and cheerful, who still holds some scrap of breath,
you who this morning laughed and filled the air with noise
and sang like blackbirds in the closes of their heath?

They are all silent. And my helm is smashed, my armor
riven, the battle axe has knocked its nails away.
My eyes bleed. In my ears sounds an enormous murmur
that is like the clamoring of wolves, or of the sea.

Come over here, raven, my fine eater of men
and cram your iron beak deep in my chest. For here
we shall be waiting for you when you come again.
Carry my smoking heart to the daughter of Ylmer

in Upsala, where the jarls sit to their good beer
and sing in chorus as they clash their cups of gold.
With all your speed, o prowler of the heath, fly there.
Seek out my love and give my heart to her. High, cold

on the grand tower, where the blackbirds swarm and nest,
you will see her standing pale amid her long black hair.
From both her ears hang ear-rings, silver of the best.
Her eyes shine clearer than the stars in temperate air.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Va, sombre messager, dis-lui bien que je l'aime,
Et que voici mon coeur. Elle reconnaîtra
Qu'il est rouge et solide et non tremblant et blême;
Et la fille d'Ylmer, Corbeau, te sourira!

Moi, je meurs. Mon esprit coule par vingt blessures.
J'ai fait mon temps. Buvez, ô loups, mon sang vermeil.
Jeune, brave, riant, libre et sans flétrissures,
Je vais m'asseoir parmi les Dieux, dans le soleil!

La Panthère Noire

Une rose lueur s'épand par les nuées;
L'horizon se dentelle, à l'Est, d'un vif éclair;
Et le collier nocturne, en perles dénouées,
S'égrène et tombe dans la mer.

Toute une part du ciel se vêt de molles flammes
Qu'il agrafe à son faîte étincelant et bleu.
Un pan traîne et rougit l'émeraude des lames
D'une pluie aux gouttes de feu.

Des bambous éveillés où le vent bat des ailes,
Des letchis au fruit pourpre et des canneliers
Pétille la rosée en gerbes d'étincelles,
Montent des bruits frais, par milliers.

Et des monts et des bois, des fleurs, des hautes mousses,
Dans l'air tiède et subtil, brusquement dilaté,
S'épanouit un flot d'odeurs fortes et douces,
Plein de fièvre et de volupté.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Go, my dark messenger, and tell her without fail
I love her, and this is my heart; and she will know
that it is red and strong, not tremulous or pale.
And she, Ylmer's daughter, will smile on you, Corbeau.

For me, I die. My life leaks out through twenty holes.
So drink, you wolves, this crimson blood. My time is done.
I, free and fadeless, take my place among those souls
who join the gods, young, brave and laughing, in the sun.

[*In the next to last line, "I, free and faultless" would be more accurate than "I, free and fadeless", but the latter appears so much better in English that I have kept it.*—R. L.]

The Black Panther

Pallors of rose widen across the clouds. The sky
along its eastern margin crinkles with fresh light,
and in a fall of unstrung pearls, drops in the sea
the loosened necklace of the night.

Now all one quarter of the sky is clothed in soft
flames clasped against the blue that glitters overhead.
One fold that lingers, in a rain of fiery drops,
colors the emerald waves with red.

And from bamboos that wake against the beating wings
of wind, and lichees with their purple fruit, and from
cinnamon trees where dews are bunched in glittering
globes, the fresh murmurs rise and swarm.

From woods and hills, from flowers and tall moss, along
the soft and subtle atmosphere that suddenly
expands, a flood of odors spreads out sweet and strong,
and fevered-full with luxury.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Par les sentiers perdus au creux des forêts vierges
Où l'herbe épaisse fume au soleil du matin;
Le long des cours d'eau vive encaissés dans leurs berges,
Sous de verts arceaux de rotin;

La reine de Java, la noire chasseresse,
Avec l'aube, revient au gîte où ses petits
Parmi les os luisants miaulent de détresse,
Les uns sous les autres blottis.

Inquiète, les yeux aigus comme des flèches,
Elle ondule, épiant l'ombre des rameaux lourds.
Quelques taches de sang, éparses, toutes fraîches,
Mouillent sa robe de velours.

Elle traîne après elle un reste de sa chasse,
Un quartier du beau cerf qu'elle a mangé la nuit;
Et sur la mousse en fleur une effroyable trace
Rouge, et chaude encore, la suit.

Autour, les papillons et les fauves abeilles
Effleurent à l'envi son dos souple du vol;
Les feuillages joyeux, de leurs mille corbeilles,
Sur ses pas parfument le sol.

Le python, du milieu d'un cactus écarlate,
Déroule son écaille, et, curieux témoin,
Par-dessus les buissons dressant sa tête plate,
La regarde passer de loin.

Sous la haute fougère elle glisse en silence,
Parmi les troncs moussus s'enfonce et disparaît.
Les bruits cessent, l'air brûle, et la lumière immense
Endort le ciel et la forêt.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There, where all paths are lost in virgin growth of trees
and hollows where thick grass steams in the morning sun,
by streams quick-running deep between declivities,
beneath green arcades of rattan,

she goes, the queen of Java, the dark huntress; at dawn
returning to the covert, where her little ones
disconsolately yowl, heap-huddled one upon
another among shining bones.

Watchful, eyes barbed like arrows, in sinuous stride
she stalks among the glooms of heavy boughs, restless,
with fresh blood spattered here and there along her side
and damp upon her velvet dress.

She drags with her a remnant of the beast she killed
and fed on in the night, quarter and half the back
of a great stag. On flowering moss grim traces spilled,
red, wet and warm still, stain her track.

The butterflies and tawny bees, in rivalry
of play, hover above and brush with wings the flow
of her back. Fronds in a thousand corbeils joyously
perfume the ground where her pads go.

And from the center of a scarlet cactus the
python unwinds his scales; curious onlooker,
rearing a flattened head above the thickets, he
watches her passing from afar.

Beneath the tall fern-brake she slithers silently,
plunges among the mossed trunks and is lost to sight.
Sounds are stopped; the air burns; the forest and the sky
are stilled in the enormous light.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Le Sommeil de Leïlah

Ni bruits d'aile, ni sons d'eau vive, ni murmures;
La cendre du soleil nage sur l'herbe en fleur,
Et de son bec furtif le bengali siffleur
Boit, comme un sang doré, le jus des mangues mûres.

Dans le verger royal où rougissent les mûres,
Sous le ciel clair qui brûle et n'a plus de couleur,
Leïlah, languissante et rose de chaleur,
Clôt ses yeux aux longs cils à l'ombre des ramures.

Son front ceint de rubis presse son bras charmant;
L'ambre de son pied nu colore doucement
Le treillis emperlé de l'étroite babouche.

Elle rit et sommeille et songe au bien-aimé,
Telle qu'un fruit de pourpre, ardent et parfumé,
Qui rafraîchit le coeur en altérant la bouche.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

translated by
FREDERICK MORGAN

Leilah Asleep

No wing-stir, no murmur of springs: all sounds are stayed.
Dust of the sun floats above the blossoming grass,
and the bengalee wren, with furtive beak, taps the rich juice
of mangoes in full bloom and ripe with golden blood.

In the king's orchard, where the mulberries blush red,
beneath a sky that burns limpid and colorless,
Leilah, all rosy in the heat and langorous,
closes her deep-lashed eyes in the dark-branching shade.

Her forehead, circleted in rubies, rests upon
one lovely arm. Her naked foot, with amber tone,
tints the pearled lattice of her slim babouche. Apart

she sleeps; and smiles in dream upon her lover's presence,
like an empurpled fruit, perfumèd and intense,
that makes the mouth's deep thirst a freshness in the heart.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RICHMOND LATTIMORE

A Note on Leconte de Lisle

The purposes of Leconte de Lisle, and the methods by which he seeks to realize them, are unusually simple, uniform, obvious, and effective. His materials are drawn chiefly from the world of the past, the remote or barbarian, particularly the Mohammedan East (his use of Greek themes is less original and less successful); or from the world of beasts; or from inanimate nature; or in massive combinations of these elements. The resultant poem may be a narrative, generally heroic; a dramatic incident of natural life; or, simply, a description. The poem will in any case be what it appears to be, and leave no room for deception or ambiguity. Leconte de Lisle is no more an impressionist than Meissonier. He works through statement, not suggestion, he has no sublety and barely a trace of humor. But he has force.

The three poems here translated, widely different though they are in subject, length, and form, nevertheless may appear on scrutiny to show the same characteristic structure. First, the broad scene is carefully set out; then against this large background is set the individual, usually solitary, figure, the "hero" of the piece. In narrative, the landscape setting (place, weather, sky and time of day) is succeeded by crowd scenes, abundant but ordered in detail. In *L'Apothéose de Mouça-al-Kebyr* we move in nine quatrains from the description of dawn at Damascus—big, splendid, quiet—through the multitudes in the city, to afternoon and the Divan of the Caliph, the inner scene described through ten more static quatrains before the long ballad is set rolling, ponderously, on its course. Analogous structure opens the shorter *L'Holocauste, Nurmahal,* many others. In *Hialmar,* the multitude is dead (in *La Fontaine aux lianes* the "hero" is a dead man), but the big, silent background is set out, as usual in present tense, before the lonely hero assumes his part. Hjalmar addresses the raven, representative of the barbarian world of brutes. The brute may be the hero, of a story (*Le Jaguar,* or the hideous *La Chasse de l'Aigle*), or of a pure tableau which implies a tragedy in nature (*La Panthère Noire, L'Aboma, L'Incantation du Loup*—and the human savage of *Le Calumet du Sachem* is scarcely different). Or

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he may simply be set, without implications, in his own world, as in *L'Albatros* or *Le Sommeil du Condor*. As in the poems about people, a crowd scene may block in the quiet of the great landscape before we come to the hero; but the crowds are now of the swarming world of beasts. The brute hero is usually a huge beast; if not, at least a dangerous one—python, lion, wolf, eagle, shark—and most often lonely. The aspects are combined in a recurrent phrase; as the panther is queen of Java, so the black eagle is "prince du ciel Mongol," the wolf "roi du Harz," the albatross "roi de l'espace et des mers sans rivages," the lion "roi du Sennaar." It becomes almost self-parody when the humming-bird appears as "roi des collines"; but the same phrase carries out of the animal world into nymphs as "jeunes Reines des eaux," noon as "Midi, Roi des étés," the Piton des Neiges as "roi des monts."

Leïlah is different, but not entirely different. As sleeping beauty, she is akin to the girls of *Sous l'Epais Sycomore,* of *Les Roses d'Ispahan,* of the very similar *La Vérandah,* not far removed from the Dianesque heroine *Thestylis*. But, though the sonnet does not allow the massive development of the quatrain-poems, we are presented to her also only after a deliberately shaped description of a tropical day; and like the man hero or beast hero, she is solitary, barbarian, and above all, natural. She makes a still picture, involved in no more action than the condor or the albatross; but a whole history lies concealed.

Marauding beast, barbarian hero, sleeping beauty all are, I think, expressions of Leconte de Lisle's frank longing for what is magnificent, natural, and young. These figures, and the natural world against which they are set, may well represent a memory of lost youth. Here innocence and cruelty go hand in hand; the barbarian and the beastly fascinate as they repel. Heroic Hjalmar and seductive Leïlah (whose sleep is also the sleep of forest and sky) can hardly be understood without reference to their fellow-barbarians, cruel and lovely panther or cruel and hideous shark. But the poet's nostalgia is an idealization of what has never happened, and neither beast nor hero nor natural world is, for all the exactitude and detail, made credible, in these poems, to a more mature understanding. The poems are melodramas, realistic but unreal. Still, taken on their own merits, they are magnificently done.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

MONROE ENGEL

Four Hours to Rome

GEORGE MATSON watched the porter carrying their two light bags down the platform ahead of them. He could have carried the bags easily himself, even Jean could have managed them without strain. But when the wizened little man came forward from the wall where he was lounging as they got out of the taxi, George could not remember how to tell him he was not needed. So now the porter swung the bags jauntily as he walked down the platform, and exchanged significant grins with the other porters, while the Matsons followed him empty-handed at a little distance, hoping that for some eyes at least the distance would obfuscate their part in this slightly ridiculous episode.

Although they were travelling first class, they had arrived at the station forty minutes before train time. The porter showed them into one of the empty compartments, collected his fee, and when they sat down together on one of the upholstered benches indicated that they should take the two window seats, opposite each other, which they then did. "As American tourists, we're sure playing par for the course," George said, after the porter had left.

"I know," Jean answered, "but there's a first time for everybody."

"It embarrasses me," George said. "I don't mind playing the sucker, but I hate to be such an ordinary sucker."

"Look," Jean said, "have you ever met a distinguished sucker?"

"But at least we could travel second class instead of first," he said.

"Oh Jesus, George," she said.

He laughed. "OK," he said. He delighted in her mild swearing. She was beautiful in a manner of severe blondness that appeared to preclude not only swearing but even any ellipsis of speech. Only a beauty so severe and quiet could take without loss the light horn-rimmed glasses, and the hair pulled back tight and a bit off center, so that the whole face seemed to accentuate the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

eyes of live-ash gray that the glasses magnified. The face, of largely immobile planes, was a setting for the quickness and mobility of the eyes.

"Where did you learn to swear so eloquently?" he asked her.

She flushed slightly, and told him to shut up. He took out a map and studied the route from Florence to Rome. Jean, sitting straight but somehow relaxed on the bench opposite him, cocked her head slightly to one side like a golden falcon and watched the increasing activity of vendors, passengers, and station officials on the platform. And George, with his new wife across from him, and the map and the journey stretched before him, saw his life a vista of continual newness. This seemed very right for him, for his chief and almost solitary talent—and this he was wise enough to know—lay in the indefatigable nature of his health. He would be better at marching endlessly into new situations than at gaining ever greater knowledge of one that was relatively static. His equipment was exact for his role—the round, sunburned, stubbornly boyish face, and the muscles that swelled evenly under the seersucker jacket, pulling the wrinkles flat each time he inhaled.

Now there was more movement in the aisle of the train. At first passersby would peer quickly into the compartment, then go on to another compartment that was empty. But since there were only half a dozen first class compartments on the train, this could not continue indefinitely. Faces peered a little longer into the compartment before they went on. Then a flat, commanding, vaguely female voice said: "In here, Herbert." The aisle door slid open, and a tall matron stamped in determinedly on high heels, followed by a short meek man, followed in turn by two porters with eight enormous pieces of luggage.

The porters started what was obviously to be a futile search for sufficient space on the baggage racks for all this baggage. The woman pushed her husband into a seat, and then stood in the narrow space between the benches supervising the porters, but managing only to get in their way. "Why can't they put their *little* bags in the aisle?" she asked, extending her chin toward the Matsons.

The Matsons accepted this as a rhetorical question, and watched the porters put three of the large suitcases into the aisle outside the compartment, then stand there waiting to be paid. "Pay the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

boys," the woman said to her husband, "but don't overtip them again."

The outweighed husband hurried into the aisle. When he returned after a few moments his wife was still standing. "Why do *they* get the two window seats?" she barked, extending her chin toward the Matsons again.

"I'm sure I don't know," her husband said, and stood patiently behind her.

George saw Jean stir uneasily. He was afraid she might move over next to him, leaving the window seat vacant, and indeed the gray haired woman seemed to be standing expectantly in the narrow space between the seats, waiting for her will to accomplish this. "We have these seats," George said, "because we were the first passengers to reach the compartment. If you'd gotten here first, you could have had them." As he blurted it out, more angrily than he had anticipated, he heard the echo of himself as a child shouting in defense of possession: first come, first served.

"Oh," the woman said, and she appeared to be considering the logic judiciously. Then another thought occurred to her, a shrewd light marching across her face before it came from her mouth as speech. "Your English is very good," she said.

"It's easy for me," George said, "I've lived in Boston all my life."

"Boston," the woman shouted. "No wonder I thought you were foreign. We're from Lake Forest." She dropped down heavily on the seat next to Jean, plummeting stiffly as though none of her joints could bend far. Her husband sat down next to George, impelled far back into the seat by his wife's will. Sit down, she seemed to say, shoving him, and stay there.

What she did say was to Jean: "Child, what beautiful hair you have. I can hardly remember any more when I had hair like that."

Both men looked at the two heads adjacent along the green baize back of the bench. The sun which, coming through the train window, made of Jean's hair a wavering, substanceless, transluscent helmet of spider gold, caught in the other head the rough split ends of hair and the glints of blue wash accentuating like the stain of a microscopic slide the coarse texture of the fibers. Somehow after all this they introduced themselves; the couple

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from Lake Forest were named Wagner, "just like the German composer."

"Is this your first trip to Italy?" Mrs. Wagner asked.

"It's *my* first trip," Jean said. "But George was here for a few months during the war."

"Oh, but that doesn't count," Mrs. Wagner said. "It's really the first trip then for both of you. How I envy you the freshness of your impressions. I've lost track of the number of times I've been here now, but I still love it." And then she added as an afterthought: "It's not your honeymoon, is it?"

"Yes," Jean said, "as a matter of fact, it is." This even though they had both decided to call it a wedding trip.

"But how wonderful," Mrs. Wagner said. "We really should have some spumanti."

Mr. Wagner came to happy life for the first time. "Yes," he said, "we really should. I'll go back to the station buffet and buy a few bottles."

"Herbert," Mrs. Wagner said, "don't get left behind again. I don't know how many more times I can prevail on the American Express to retrieve you for me. The last time they were less than gracious about it."

And Jean said: "Please don't bother. I don't like to drink on a train anyway." Mr. Wagner relaxed back into his seat reluctantly.

The compartment door slid open again. Two small boys, about two and four, hurtled each other into the compartment, then started backing out again shyly. A man, presumably their father, came through the door after them, blocking their escape. "Ferma," he commanded the boys, "ferma," and astonishingly they stood still. He glanced apologetically at the four Americans, then helped the boys take off the sweaters they were wearing despite the heat. The boys actually seemed cool and comfortable, but the father—a slight, well-dressed, respectable man of about 30—was sweating liberally. He placed the older boy on the seat next to Mrs. Wagner, where they shrank apart from each other in an immediate and mutual repugnance. Then he sat down next to Mr. Wagner with the younger child on his lap. The child squirmed to be let down. "Maurizio," the father said, "ferma," and the child subsided once more.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The father mopped his face, his wrists, and the back of his neck with a large white handkerchief. Then he turned to the Americans again, and this time spoke to them, in Italian. He spoke quickly and nervously, but George got at least the general story that he was telling. He was taking his sons to visit their grandparents in Rome. His wife had gone to Arezzo two days before to visit an ailing aunt, and was to board this train today at the Arezzo station and go on with them to Rome. But he was sure that something would go wrong, that his wife would not find them, that he would have to cope with the boys alone all the way to Rome, until he could turn them over there to their grandmother. He was a lawyer and did his work diligently, but children were women's work and trains were—he smiled now warily —Mussolini's work.

George shaped a speech in his mind, in Italian, that might reassure the man. But Mrs. Wagner was too fast for him. "No cabitch," she said fiercely to the Italian, "no cabitch."

The man murmured a nervous apology, and turned back to the child on his lap, tickling him gently on the inside of one thigh. "If they speak good Italian," Mrs. Wagner said, "I answer them. But I will not even try to understand this daylaborer's dialect. And anyway, once you let them start to talk to you, they'll talk your ears off."

"He says he's a lawyer," George said rather futilely. He loathed Mrs. Wagner, but she was too energetic and too quick for him.

"They'll tell you almost anything, child," Mrs. Wagner said, "but don't believe them."

George had not been called "child" for a long time, and he could not take it kindly from this tightly buttressed harridan. He wondered if after she had reduced him and Jean to silent dependence, as she had already done her husband, she would have to get to work after all on the Italian lawyer and his children. There was a moment of heightened activity on the platform, and the train started.

"It's wonderful that you can start your travelling while you're still young," Mrs. Wagner said. "I don't know anything like travelling to broaden people."

"Yes," Jean said. For the next few minutes the changing landscape saved them from further conversation.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The motion of the train soon put Mr. Wagner to sleep. When there was a sudden curve in the track, he would fall over on either George or the Italian, depending on which way the track curved. Each time he tipped to one side or another, he spilled a warm, sweet, ginny odor. When he woke intermittently, he ogled the lemony smoothness of Jean's knees, and George, seeing this, wished her skirt was longer, and remembered the maid at the pensione who had asked gravely whether they wanted single beds or a "letto matrimoniale." The younger boy was sleeping fitfully on his father's lap, and the older one ate candies one after another from a paper sack, putting the bright colored wrappings from each candy back into the sack until it became difficult for him to find the remaining candies among all the waste of colored papers.

Mrs. Wagner was giving Jean a subdued lecture on the problems of the travelling female. Most of it was audible to George. When she travelled anywhere but in England, she always carried one suitcase full of soap, toilet paper and such like—the "such-like" was punctuated by an intimate smile. She had a special pocket for her passport built into each of her foundation garments. She patted her stomach uncomfortably when Jean said she didn't own a foundation garment. Then she launched into a long story of how a Paris hairdresser had taken advantage of her once while he was washing her hair.

"Why Mrs. Wagner," Jean said, "I can't imagine anything like that happening to you."

During the silence that followed this, Jean took a paper-backed book out of her purse and began to read. There was a rough stretch of track, and Mr. Wagner sloughed back and forth between George and the Italian like a dead fish dangling on a string. Presently they were approaching Arezzo, and all the Italian's expectations of disaster—which the motion of the train and the tractability of the children had somehow quieted—flared up again. He dumped the younger child from his lap onto the seat, and hurried into the aisle where he leaned far out the window to peer ahead at the station.

"The fool," Mrs. Wagner said. "He'll break his head on one of those metal telegraph poles."

She was quite right. It was hard to understand how the poles missed him—or he missed them, since the poles were stationary

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and it was he who was flying by on one of those trains he didn't trust. But he was still unharmed when they pulled into the station, and he had seen his wife and was shouting to her. "Gina," he called, "Gina," and there was real urgency in his voice. He put his head into the compartment and shouted as loudly to the two boys: "La mama." Then he ran down the aisle to meet her.

When he returned with her a moment later, the three dependent males of her family deluged her all at once with frantic conversation. She was a pleasant looking woman, perhaps no older than Jean, neither fat nor thin, but already the soft unresistant amplitude of her breasts and her slightly rounded stomach gave her a settled appearance, somehow enhanced by its prematurity. She chided her husband for travelling first class, a criminal expense. He threw up his hands helplessly: what was a man to do, travelling alone with two diabolical children? The boys, who must have been as uncomfortable alone with their father as he was with them, flung themselves on their mother now, kissing her and tugging her clothes into disorder. She laughed at them, a laugh that was almost wanton, almost a giggle, and ordered them off her, but when they withdrew it was to circle her closely, like dogs with a treed cat, their small high voices yelping excitedly.

What quieted them finally was the food she produced in reassuring quantities from the basket she was carrying. There were aluminum containers of still warm pastina for the boys. For the older one, Carlo, there was also a mammoth sandwich of prosciutto, and for the younger, the one her husband called Maurizio but to whom she referred only as Bimbo and to whom she would doubtless give no other name until she had another child, there was a small thermos of broth. Then, when the boys were settled, she produced an omelet for her husband and herself, and a bottle of wine. The omelet was fried hard, and they whittled bite-size pieces off it with a pen-knife, the way one might whittle pieces off a wedge of cheese.

The site of all this food made George hungry, but on Mr. Wagner, who had awakened reluctantly when the train stopped at the station, it had an opposite effect. He turned pale green as a seasick man watching a child eat chocolate eclairs, and belched quietly but repeatedly. "How disgusting," Mrs. Wagner said.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

George thought at first she referred to her husband, and was embarrassed for him, but when he realized that she meant not her husband but the Italian family, his embarrassment turned to irritation. "This sort of business is revolting," Mrs. Wagner said. "They ought to have separate compartments for tourists, if they want to encourage travel in Italy. Now that they have all these American dollars, it isn't even safe to travel first class any more."

An intuitive sense told George that the Italian woman, Gina, had understood what was said. She looked at Mrs. Wagner carefully, contemptuously but dispassionately for a moment, then returned to her omelet. Her husband and the two boys turned toward her expectantly, indicating they knew she had understood what they could not understand themselves, but she only nodded her head negatively to them between bites of the omelet, and then wiped the smaller child's greasy face with a paper napkin.

"It's strange that you should find this disgusting," George said to Mrs. Wagner. "It makes me hungry."

"Young man," Mrs. Wagner said, and the increased age she allowed him showed her displeasure, "don't go native on me."

Mr. Wagner belched more loudly. "Herbert," Mrs. Wagner said, "please be quiet."

Jean had drawn herself off into the extreme far corner of her seat, and was staring steadfastly out the window, and though George sensed her sympathy, he wished for a more active support. The time had come, he felt, to make some gesture that would ally him with the Italians and, once and for all, show the Wagners—particularly Mrs. Wagner—that he was their enemy. But he also suspected that neither his imagination nor the compartment were sufficiently commodious for much of a gesture.

Something simple would have to suffice, he decided. It was his healthy stomach actually, rather than his brain, which supplied him with his gesture. From the window of the compartment he summoned a vendor from whom he bought a prosciutto sandwich and a bottle of beer for himself, and some ice cream for Jean.

"Oh God, not you too," Mrs. Wagner said, and Mr. Wagner's stomach issued a distressed, plaintive rumble. "Herbert," Mrs. Wagner said, "how many times do I have to tell you to be quiet."

George took his change from the vendor and stuffed the mass

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of multi-sized bills into his coat pocket, meaning to sort it out later. The train pulled out of the station and gathered speed. George applied himself enthusiastically to his food, but came away quickly, disappointed. The beer was warm and rather flat, the thin hard Italian ham more than a trifle rancid. Jean took one taste of the ice cream, then placed the container next to her on the ledge of the window and did not touch it again.

"What's wrong?" he asked her curtly.

"Nothing's wrong, George. It's just rather watery ice cream."

"Don't eat it then," he said, but realized this was unnecessary, since she had already put it aside. He took another bite of his sandwich, another sip of the beer, but only confirmed his disenchantment. He felt Mrs. Wagner's eyes watching him closely.

"Not very good, is it?" Mrs. Wagner said.

"I've had worse meals on the New Haven Railroad," he snapped irrelevantly, "and paid more for them."

"Oh?" Mrs. Wagner said.

George rewrapped the sandwich in its paper and put it and the bottle of beer under his seat. "Maybe I'll have some more later," he said.

"Yes," Mrs. Wagner said, "but I doubt it."

George took the change out of his coat pocket, and sorted it. There was a bunch of torn five lire notes, worth less than a penny apiece, mended together with scotch tape. It didn't make sense. Suddenly he realized that there was less change than there should have been, one hundred lire less. He counted again, and it was still so. A rush of anger washed over him. He flung open the window and peered back to find the vendor, but they were already several miles from Arezzo.

"George," Jean asked anxiously, "what's wrong?"

"He short-changed me," George protested. "He short-changed me one hundred lire."

"But George," Jean said, "don't worry about it. That's only about fifteen cents."

And Mrs. Wagner said simultaneously: "What did you expect?"

"No," George answered both of them, not knowing quite what he meant. "No," he shouted again. He felt all the anger of innocence and good-will betrayed. He could not bear to be a fool

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

—to be dull was all right, but not to be a fool. His round tanned face was fiery now, and the muscles of his arms and shoulders quivered with rage. He looked around the compartment, looked for someone on whom to transfer his burden.

Jean eyed him with concern, Mrs. Wagner with patronizing contempt, Mr. Wagner with physical distaste. The two Italian children were somnolent again, and the father too looked as if he might fall asleep now that his cares had been disestablished, and he was well fed. It was the Italian woman, Gina, on whom he turned, for somehow she had caused all the difficulty. He turned toward her, and holding the soiled bills high in the air, in his right hand, shook them at her. It was her fault, and he would hold her to her responsibility. Besides, she understood English.

"Why did he cheat me?" George bellowed at her, from all the wounding of his innocence. "Why did he cheat me?" He leaned over and shook the bills in her face. Her husband started ineffectually from his seat, but when George glared at him invitingly, he subsided.

If the woman, Gina, understood English, she would not allow that she understood much. She addressed herself to Mrs. Wagner. "Please," she said, "please," not in supplication so much as in boredom.

"My dear lady, yes," Mrs. Wagner said. And then to George: "Mr. Matson, will you please stop behaving like a fool."

As suddenly as his anger had come it was gone, leaving only shame, for he felt irreclaimably a fool. He retreated back into his seat. He dared not look even at Jean, and he wondered how he could survive the next two hours or more until they got to Rome.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JOSEPH FRANK

Romanticism and Reality in Robert Penn Warren

ROBERT PENN WARREN IS a highly self-conscious writer, not only a novelist of elemental power but one of our best literary critics as well. It can be taken for granted, then, that when Mr. Warren chose a fragment from a famous poem as the title of his latest novel, *World Enough and Time,* he did so because there was more than a casual relation between the two; and perhaps the best way to approach the book is to examine the poem for a moment. The poem, of course, is Andrew Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress," and the title is from the first line: "Had we but world enough, and time." In the poem, a lover tells his coy mistress that he would, if he could, devote an impossible eternity to her courtship:

> *An hundred years should go to praise*
> *Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze;*
> *Two hundred to adore each breast;*
> *But thirty thousand to the rest.*

However, he argues quite cogently that death would intervene in this happy arrangement before the courtship would have any palpable results; and this being so, he urges his mistress to recognize the facts of life: "Now let us sport us while we may."

The poem, thus, is based on the antinomy between the desire for an impossible ideal of courtly love—a properly Romantic ideal—and a recognition of the implacable barriers in our poor human lot that make this ideal self-defeating; it reveals the contradiction, the necessary conflict, between the world and the idea. This is the conflict at the heart of Mr. Warren's latest novel, and it is because the protagonist cannot face it with the good-humored worldliness of Marvell that Mr. Warren has subtitled the book: a Romantic novel.

To be sure, this is not the first time that Mr. Warren has been occupied with Romanticism. The literary group out of which he sprang, the Southern Agrarians, fought a constant critical battle against both the theory and practice of literary Romanticism; and Mr. Warren in particular, in a well-known essay, spoke out in favor of an "impure poetry" capable of assimilating the tough complexities of experience. Poetic unity, Mr. Warren argued, should not be achieved by glossing over those obstinately "unpoetic" aspects of reality that are an inevitable part of human experience. The Romantic poet, in Mr. Warren's view, tries to "strain nature out of nature," abstracting one aspect of an experience—for example, the spiritual aspects of love—and calling this the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

total experience. Against Shelley's "I arise from dreams of thee" Mr. Warren cites the garden scene from *Romeo and Juliet*, in which Mercutio utters ribald obscenities as the lovers declaim their passion in pure Platonic accents; and we can take this passion seriously, according to Mr. Warren, only because it can survive the corrosive effects of Mercutio's "realism." As an artist, Mr. Warren is deeply concerned with "the context in which, and the terms by which, faith and ideals (can) be earned."[1] In a much larger framework—a framework no longer of esthetic but of ethical and, ultimately, of metaphysical commitments —the same concern plays a major part in Mr. Warren's novels.

This is not the place, however, to examine all of Mr. Warren's novels from such a point of view. But without going back beyond *All the King's Men*, we can see how this notion of Romanticism has already entered Mr. Warren's work. In this book, Adam Stanton is explicitly called "a Romantic"; he "has a picture of the world in his head, and when the world doesn't conform in any respect to this picture, he wants to throw the world away." It is the cynical and worldly-wise Jack Burden who makes this comment, but in his own hard-boiled way Jack Burden is just as much of a Romantic as Adam Stanton. For even though Jack is up to his neck in the off-color politics of Willie Stark, the measure of his Romanticism is precisely the extent of his ironical detachment from the events in which he takes part. He refuses, in other words, to accept the full responsibility of his participation; no more than Adam Stanton can Jack Burden—at least until the very end of the novel—accept in any true sense the "impure" reality of the world that confronts him; but while Adam Stanton, the pure Romantic, revenges himself on reality by committing murder and being murdered in turn, Jack Burden succeeds in forming a "new picture of the world" which, in leading him to accept his own guilt, simultaneously causes him to forgive the guilt of others. By transcending his Romanticism in this way, Jack Burden "earns" the faith and ideals—however chastened and unassuming they may be—which permit him once more to "go into the awful convulsions of the world."

In *All the King's Men*, the character of Willie Stark poses the problem of Romanticism and "conversion to the real," so to speak, in still other terms. Willie Stark is defined as the "man of fact," who, presumably, manipulates the "impure" reality of the world with a fine disregard for the moral problems that weigh on both Jack Burden and Adam Stanton; but Willie becomes this "man of fact" only after he finds he has been played for a sucker, and that high ideals are not enough to combat political corruption. This is what impels Willie to abandon his wide-eyed innocence about political realities—also a form of Romanticism—and makes him decide to beat the politicians at their own game. And so Willie, too, is converted to the "impurities" of the real; his tragedy is that, at least until it is too late, he accepts it without self-reflection,

[1] "Pure and Impure Poetry," by Robert Penn Warren. See *Criticism: The Foundations of Modern Literary Judgment*, edited by Mark Schorer et al. Harcourt Brace, 1948.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

without the humility and the guilt that make Jack Burden's acceptance a true reconcilation of the dualism between "pure" and "impure" reality. We have, then, in *All the King's Men* three levels of relation between Romanticism and reality: the total rejection of Adam Stanton, the total acceptance of Willie Stark, and the transcendence of the dualism in the moral evolution of Jack Burden.

With this background in mind, we are in a better position to understand the task that Mr. Warren undertook in the later novel. The intrigue of *World Enough and Time*, of course, is based on a famous Kentucky murder case tried in 1826 (a case which has previously furnished material for Poe and William Gilmore Simms, among others); nor does Mr. Warren shirk any of the demands imposed by his choice of time and locale. This handling of local color is admirably evocative without getting bogged down in trivialities, and some of the best pages in the book—the religious revival meeting of Corinthian McClardy, the election in the small Kentucky town of Lumton, the description of the old Marcher place— are straight historical re-creation. At first glance, therefore, it would seem that Mr. Warren is trying his hand at an orthodox historical novel; and *World Enough and Time* has been seen almost exclusively in this light—as if Mr. Warren wished to present the past in its own terms and, so far as possible, from its own point of view. But this is far from being true. For one thing, there is a constant shift in perspective between the past and the present which is alien to the historical form as such, and which—leaving aside for the moment the question of its esthetic success or failure—is hardly the result of inadvertence; it indicates, to say the least, that Mr. Warren was consciously using this interplay of perspective for a specific purpose. Further, if we examine *World Enough and Time*, and particularly the spiritual history of its protagonist, Jeremiah Beaumont, we find that it duplicates the same dialectic between Romanticism and reality—or, to use Mr. Warren's alternate set of terms, the idea and the world—that we have pointed out in *All the King's Men*.

The first half of the book embodies the dialectic relation between the world and the idea, or more specifically, the necessary fall (Fall?) from the heights of the idea into the miasma of the world when the striving to realize the idea involves a rejection of "impure" reality. Various symbols are used by Mr. Warren to express this relation in the character of Jeremiah Beaumont, and each of these symbols foreshadows the action in which Beaumont becomes involved. As a boy, for instance, Beaumont goes to a revival meeting and is seized by an access of religious ardor—but this ends with his first sexual encounter and leaves him filled with horror and disgust. Similarly, he undergoes a period of religious asceticism that culminates in a mystical pantheism, a joy in identifying himself completely with nature: "I seemed to become the tree, and knew how it was to be rooted in the depths of the earth and bear with my boughs the weight of glittering ice like joy. Then my substance seemed to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pass beyond the tree and into all the land around that spread in the sunlight, and into the sunlight itself." Even this, however, troubles a frontier theologian in whom Beaumont confides: it could easily be a snare of the Devil, Beaumont is told, since "the saved man . . . should not enter into nature."

Jeremiah Beaumont suffers this inescapable self-betrayal of the idea when he throws up a promising law career after hearing that his friend and protector, Colonel Cassius Fort, has seduced a young lady of good family who has borne him a dead, illegitimate child. The news of this injustice suddenly makes all of Jeremiah Beaumont's past life meaningless and his future suspect, for "his success would be poisoned at the root." "Ah, where was the greatness of life?" he asks himself. "Was it only a dream? Could a man not come to some moment when, all dross and meanness of life consumed, one could live in the pure idea? If only for a moment?" Out of this inner need to give meaning to his own life in terms of the idea, Jeremiah Beaumont constitutes himself the champion of Rachel Jordan;—without stopping to ask whether his own inner need gives him any right to take on himself the responsibility for the destiny of others. In any case, he courts Rachel Jordan himself and receives from her the admonition to kill Fort, though it would be more accurate to say "that he had at last succeeded in laying the obligation on her and thereby on himself, for the obligation sprang from the depth of his own nature . . ."

The world, however, takes little account of Jeremiah Beaumont's inner needs. Fort refuses to fight a duel and Beaumont, at this point, cannot bring himself to kill Fort in cold blood; so that when Fort leaves the area, Beaumont prosaically marries Rachel Jordan and becomes a wealthy landowner—a result that gives him, for a time, a certain amount of simple happiness, but also leaves him with a sense of guilt and self-defeat. He had set out to uphold the idea in all its purity, to defend it against the way of the world, and the upshot is merely that he has made an advantageous marriage in the worldly sense! In addition, despite his seclusive ways, he becomes drawn into the rough-and-tumble of local politics, and now that the project of living in the idea, by killing Fort, no longer gives his life a meaning, he dabbles with land speculations in the still unclaimed West to prove himself in the eyes of the world.

Actually, the political conflict in which Beaumont becomes involved is intended to duplicate the terms of his personal desire to accomplish an act of perfect justice. The burning political issue of the day was the amending of the state constitution in the interests of the debt-ridden; and as Mr. Warren pictures it, this becomes a clash between the concept of law as an absolute or as a servant of man's needs. Does the individual or a group have the right to take the law into its own hands to satisfy some private or temporary ideal of justice—as Beaumont wanted to do with Colonel Fort, or as the party of the New Court wanted to do with the state constitution? Or is there some moral prerogative, some absolute, to which, finally, both the individual and the group

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

must submit? Mr. Warren answers this question so far as Jeremiah Beaumont the individual is concerned, but it is not quite clear to what extent he intends the parallel to be carried through on the political level. Needless to say, however, Jeremiah Beaumont belongs to the party of the New Court, the party whose leaders seek justice at all costs and whatever price.

These two levels come together when Colonel Fort returns to the area as an opponent of the New Court, and the leaders of the party, equally possessed by the fanaticism of the idea, decide to use Jeremiah Beaumont's purpose to accomplish their own. Knowing of Beaumont's earlier avowal to kill Fort, they manufacture a false handbill, supposedly distributed by Fort, accusing Rachel Beaumont of having fathered her illegitimate child by a mulatto slave; and it is with something like joy that Jeremiah Beaumont, in the second half of the book, receives the call to take up his mission again. In setting out once more, however, Beaumont decides not to let his own idealism betray him, as it had done in his first attempt to make Fort pay for his crime:

> It was perfectly clear. He had lived so long in the idea that that alone had seemed real. The world had seemed nothing. And because the world had seemed nothing, he had lived in the way of the world, feeling safe because he held the idea, pure, complete, abstract, and self-fulfilling. He had thought that he was redeemed by the idea, that sooner or later the idea would redeem the world.
>
> But now he knew: the world must redeem the idea. He knew now that the idea must take on flesh and fact, not to redeem, but to be redeemed.

Jeremiah Beaumont, in other words, has now reached the attitude of Adam Stanton: he is ready to commit murder to "redeem the idea," to give the idea a being and an existence in the "impure reality" it had previously shunned.

Jeremiah Beaumont proceeds to murder Colonel Fort in secret, and by an additional irony, he stands trial and is convicted of the crime largely on the testimony of false witnesses: "all the lies and false witness against me told truth . . ." Once the idea engages itself on this path, however, it cannot stop until it transforms itself into its opposite and, like Willie Stark, accepts the world as the *only* reality. Beaumont, though, is not a "man of fact" who can seize the world joyously and use it for his own purposes; the tonality of his acceptance is totally different from that of Willie Stark. Mr. Warren sets the atmosphere in the outlaw settlement of La Gran' Boz, located in the backwater swamps of the lower Mississippi, to which Beaumont and his wife escape after he is condemned to death for the murder of Fort. In this dismal hiding-place, immersed in the primeval slime, Beaumant gradually descends into the drunkenness, debauchery and animal-like existence of the other inhabitants: the world again triumphs over Beaumont's "idea," and this time on the lowest level of spiritual degradation.

"For I had sought innocence," Jeremiah Beaumont writes of himself (he had

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clung unyieldingly to the conviction of his inner innocence despite the act of murder)—"and had fled into the brute wilderness where all is innocence, for all is the same in that darkness, and even the shameful canker is innocence." If one uses the world to redeem the idea, but refuses to accept the ensuing guilt, then there is no point at which the descent into the moral abyss can be halted: for the impenitent Romantic, the purity of his inner motives is enough to justify any crime. And by this return to nature in the literal sense, where all moral distinctions between good and evil are abolished, Jeremiah Beaumont accomplishes the destiny that had been implicit in the mystical pantheism of his youth.

Nevertheless, it is at this point—after Rachel Beaumont goes mad and commits suicide and Beaumont discovers that he has been duped—that he begins to comprehend the true nature of his acts. He had started to write an account of his life while awaiting trial, in prison, for the murder of Fort; and Mr. Warren quotes this fictitious diary (which forms the narrative groundwork of the book) to show Beaumont's final transcendence of the dualism between the world and the idea. "It is the first and last temptation," Beaumont writes, "to name the idea as all, which I did, and in that error was my arrogance, and the beginning of my undoing and cold exile from mankind." From this error, as in Adam Stanton, follows another: "man will use the means of the natural world, and its dark ways, to gain that end he names holy by the idea, and ah! the terror of that, the terror of that." The disillusioned Romantic, thus, commits murder to redeem his idea in the world, disregarding the incongruity between his means and his ends. Or, as in the case of Willie Stark and the next-to-final phase of Jeremiah Beaumont, he may "deny the idea and its loneliness and embrace the world as all . . . to seek communion only in the blank cup of nature, and innocence there."

Finally, there is the conclusion that both Jack Burden and Jeremiah Beaumont reach: "If I can clasp my guilt" Beaumont writes, it "may become the mark of my triumph, as of my shame . . . I no longer seek to justify. I seek only to suffer." This is the moment of revelation and of knowledge—but of a special kind of knowledge, "knowledge that is identity." For the Romantic now accepts his complicity in the "impure reality" to which he had felt superior; he experiences an illimitable pity for all others caught in this evil; he acknowledges his identity with them and, at the same time, establishes his own identity. By attaining this knowledge Jeremiah Beaumont achieves a momentary salvation, though it is cut short by his own murder as he is on his way back, after his escape from prison, to "shake the hangman's hand . . . and call him my brother at last."

It should be obvious from this that *World Enough and Time*, whatever else it may be, is not a conventional historical novel. In my opinion, Mr. Warren chose the historical genre because, in doing so, he hoped to express more clearly and more deeply the vision that is at the centre of his moral universe—what we

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have called the dialectic between Romanticism and reality. After all, the historical novel is the child of the Romantic movement in literature, the chosen vehicle for the Romantic longing to escape from an oppressive reality (though, of course, the Romantic historical novel was recognized as an implicit criticism of its own time and was not a pure "escape" in the modern sense). How better to express the relations between Romanticism and reality than by using the Romantic literary form *par excellence?* And this is the point at which the intention of Mr. Warren's multiple perspectives becomes clear. Jeremiah Beaumont conceives of his own ideas and purposes in high, Romantic style, and his own image of himself, until the final confession at the end, is largely untroubled by doubts as to the nobility and ultimate rightness of his attitudes. But Mr. Warren, naturally, does not wish the reader to accept these attitudes at their face value; and so he continually introduces other perspectives from which they may be evaluated. We might say that Mr. Warren himself plays Mercutio to Jeremiah Beaumont's Romeo, or Sancho Panza to his Don Quixote;—though these comparisons do not mean that Mr. Warren employs his perspectives for any comic effect.

Just what are these perspectives, and how does Mr. Warren use them? At the center of the book there is the perspective of Jeremiah Beaumont's narrative, using the somewhat pompous, strongly Biblical rhetoric of its day and giving Beaumont's attitude with unblinking seriousness. Then there is the author, meditating in a half-debunking, half-admiring manner on the tragic story he is unfolding. "It was a drama he [Beaumont] had prepared," Mr. Warren tells us in the first few pages, "an ambiguous drama which served both to affirm and to deny life, to affirm and to deny humanity. But it may have been the drama Jeremiah Beaumont had to prepare in order to live at all. . . . And it may be that a man cannot live unless he prepares a drama, or at least cannot live as a human being against the ruck of the world." But a paragraph later, the debunking note prevails: "To us, at this distance, with the blood all dried to powder, it is sometimes the most serious speeches and grand effects which give the farce."

To these two perspectives, which tend to cancel each other out, Mr. Warren adds a third: the juxtaposition of a banal present against a past which, for all its outmoded rhetoric, has an incontestable nobility. The clearest example occurs at the very end of the book, where Mr. Warren has a page of non-stop prose in the breathless manner that John Dos Passos took over from Mollie Bloom's monologue in *Ulysses:* "Things went on their way, and the Commonwealth of Kentucky has, by the latest estimate, 2,819,000 inhabitants, and the only Shawnee in the country is in a WPA mural on a post-office wall . . ." etc. Immediately following this is a quotation from the last entry in Jeremiah Beaumont's manuscript, in which he asks: "I had longed to do justice in the world, and what was worthy of praise . . . is that longing to be wholly damned? And in my crime and vainglory of self is there no worth lost? . . . was all for naught?" Seen absolutely, therefore, Jeremiah Beaumont's Romanticism leads

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

only to catastrophe and chaos. But seen relatively, against the background of a present that has lost all standards of value, the final accent seems to be placed on those elements of moral grandeur inherent in Beaumont's quest for perfect justice.

A good many critics have objected to Mr. Warren's use of these perspectives, largely, it seems to me, for the wrong reasons. A major weakness of the book is not that Mr. Warren breaks the objectivity of his narrative from time to time, but rather that he does not break it frequently enough. For long stretches the only perspective is that of Jeremiah Beaumont in the exalted flush of his Romantic ardor—and it is sometimes difficult to tell this apart from the *clichés* of old-fashioned melodrama. Take a passage like this, just before Beaumont receives the command to kill Fort from Rachel Jordan:

> "Love," she said bitterly. "How should I know what love is?"
>
> "I know what it is," he declared. "It is that for which a man would do anything. And I—"
>
> "Too late—too late!" she cried. "For all the world is ruined."
>
> He gripped her hand more strongly, and leaned at her speaking rapidly and in a low voice. "One world is ruined," he said, "but we will make another. Do you hear? And to make another we must throw the first away. . . . We must crush it. Destroy it. Do you hear?" *etc.*

In *All the King's Men*, the melodrama was carried successfully because the style, in every sentence, was infused with the irony and cynicism of the narrator—Jack Burden. Through the texture of the style itself, Mr. Warren brought home both the negative cynicism of Burden—his corroding scorn for the hypocrisies of hand-me-down morality—and also (if the Hegelian term is permissible) the negation of this negation, the self-destructive cynicism which, in turning against its own nullity, prepared the way for a positive affirmation of values at the end. Unfortunately, in *World Enough and Time* the perspective of irony enters so sporadically that it is completely overshadowed by the melodrama as such taken at its own value; and, more often than not, even when the irony enters it is quickly counterbalanced by the perspective of admiration—a perspective that may validly apply at the conclusion, after Beaumont has accepted his guilt, but which is rather hard to swallow before that point. Occasionally, Mr. Warren makes an attempt to work the irony into the texture of his narrative style, as in this sentence about Rachel Jordan's mother: "The old woman, gathering her last courage and strength in the face of the impending disgrace [the illegitimate child] urged Rachel to take herb tea and calomel to bring it off, to ride horseback (that was the classic treatment), to do anything, anything to save the shame." But usually, when the narrative style is other than non-committal, it adopts the tone and attitude of Jeremiah Beaumont in his stagiest moments.

Since the perspectives are introduced so sparsely, clearly the book has to be carried, if it is carried at all, by the central character of Jeremiah Beaumont.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The curve of Beaumont's evolution, as we have seen, contains in itself the entire dialectic of Romanticism and reality; Mr. Warren does not incorporate different aspects of this dialectic in separate characters as he did in *All the King's Men.* The result is that the other characters, sharply as they are visualized, are more or less accessory to the theme of Jeremiah Beaumont's quest and are used mainly for purposes of the intrigue. There are two exceptions to this statement: the marvellously realized Percival Skrogg, a physical image of the fanaticism of the idea, and Beaumont's jailer, Munn Short the backwoodsman, whose dialect tale prefigures Beaumont's eventual acceptance of his guilt and has the same function in the book as Cass Mastern's story in *All the King's Men.* But these characters, nonetheless, do not stand in the same crucial relation to Jeremiah Beaumont as Willie Stark and Adam Stanton did to Jack Burden, for Beaumont's experience duplicates and encompasses their own at one or another stage of his career.

Now as a novelist Mr. Warren has enormous verbal, mimetic and dramatic gifts, but he has never succeeded in giving us people from the inside: his characters tend to be "flat," that is, to embody one or another drive or passion that defines their total substance. If they change at all it is a sudden change, the result of an external pressure rather than of any process of inner development; or in any event, the inner development is taken for granted and only its effects are described. Jeremiah Beaumont, however, has to undergo inner changes that, taken abstractly, rival in depth and profundity those of Dostoevsky's most extreme creations—Raskolnikov or Stavrogin, let us say; and Mr. Warren's attempt to portray Beaumont solely in terms of external symbolism (like the pantheistic experience we have quoted) fails to give him the necessary emotional stature to support the book. Nowhere do we feel that Beaumont's idealism, absurd and misguided though it may be, springs forth irresistibly from some deep psychic pressure; nowhere do we feel any inner torment, any agony of conscience or sensibility impelling first the murder and then a repentance that even Dostoevsky could not make plausible at the end of *Crime and Punishment;* nowhere, in short, does Jeremiah Beaumont seem anything but a lifeless automaton going through motions that do not vitally concern him at all.

And this impression is reinforced by the curious manner in which Mr. Warren has plotted the book. Beaumont finally murders Fort, it will be noted, as the result of a ruse which in those days might have impelled any man to take the law into his own hands. The knife is finally wielded, then, not so much because Beaumont, possessed by the idea, wants perfect justice, but because he has been tricked externally; the motivation of the murder, even though it may originally have sprung from an inner necessity, relegates this inner necessity to the background at the time of the deed. And at the very beginning, when Beaumont hears the story of Rachel Jordan, his informant, we are told at the end of the book, "feigned . . . a noble rage at her plight and shamed Jeremiah to his desperate purpose"; even before this remark is made, Beaumont himself discovers that this "noble rage" was as much of a lie as the slanderous handbill. Con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sequently, Beaumont ends up by seeming a pitiful puppet at the mercy of all kinds of external influences that have nothing to do with his quest for perfect justice. Where, then, is the exemplary value of Beaumont's dedication to perfect justice and the consequences of his quest? It is almost as if Mr. Warren, feeling the weakness of a motivation hinged solely on Beaumont's character as he handles it, decided to supplement this by a well-greased plot; but in doing so he considerably weakens the real import of his theme.

Indeed, this conflict between plot and theme seems to me a reflection, on the level of technique, of a more fundamental conflict possibly involving Mr. Warren's future evolution as a novelist. Through the dialectic of Romanticism and reality Mr. Warren wishes to communicate a religious experience and, what is more, one that is religious with a positive connotation. It is not based, like T. S. Eliot's religiosity, on a theology of negation, on the absence of God in the world of ordinary experience and the impossibility of attaining salvation except through some mystical transcendence; on the contrary, for Mr. Warren this transcendence is precisely a movement of love and identification with others in a community of guilt that transforms the meaning of everyday life itself.[2] This theme, of course, is one of the most difficult to make viable in a secular culture like our own, and no doubt it is for this reason that Mr. Warren has hesitated to approach it directly.

The characters incarnating this theme are usually ignorant backwoodsmen like Willie Proudfit in *Night Rider,* Ashby Wyndham in *At Heaven's Gate,* and in part, Munn Short in *World Enough and Time* (the first two have only an ancillary relation to the other plot material of the books in which they appear). In *All the King's Men,* certainly, the theme emerges indirectly from the concatenation of events, but only two characters are motivated by it directly: the Scholarly Attorney and Cass Mastern. The first is seen solely through the contemptuously critical eyes of Jack Burden, and the second appears in a

---

[2]For students of sources, it might be pointed out that Mr. Warren's theology probably derives from John Crowe Ransom's influential but little-known book, *God Without Thunder.* A passage like the following contains the core of Mr. Warren's morality: "And as I understand the myth of Christ, it meant: Christ also is the Demigod, the Man-God, who represents the highest human development—but observe how he refuses to try to be the God; believe on him in the light of his self-confessed limitations."

"Satan was the Pretender, the Archangel who aspired. Christ was the Son who had no intentions upon his Father's throne. So the role of Christ was of a nobility unparalleled in the lore of myths: *to be the Demigod who refused to set up as God.*" (*God Without Thunder,* p. 140.)

Mr. Ransom's book came out in the Thirties, when its attacks on science and championship of the myth fell on deaf ears (except in the case of his immediate students, like Robert Penn Warren). It is time, however, that the book be rediscovered and republished, since the cultural climate is now far more favorable to its point of view.

Some of Mr. Ransom's polemics with H. L. Mencken are a good deal out of date, but his interpretations of literary and Biblical myths are quite striking. His view of Satan as "the Spirit of Secular Science" resembles some of the writings of Leon Shestov, the Russian Existentialist. In any event, it is impossible to understand the Southern Agrarian movement without having read this book.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

historical interlude which, though of great thematic importance, still remains incidental to the main business of the plot. At the end of the book, Jack Burden decides to write the life of Cass Mastern because his own spiritual evolution now enables him to comprehend, as a form of repentence, Mastern's obstinate self-sacrifices and complete disregard of worldly interests; but this muted coda is rather lost sight of in the fanfare surrounding the murder of Willie Stark. What this means is that the reader, in general, has been asked by Mr. Warren to accept this religious experience either as a kind of aberration (the hillbilly characters and the Scholarly Attorney), or as a side issue that does not directly motivate the plot machinery. Only in *World Enough and Time* is this experience placed squarely at the center of the book.

For this reason, *World Enough and Time* seems to me essentially a transition book in Mr. Warren's *oeuvre,* representing a first attempt to grapple head-on with a theme that he has not yet found the proper means to express. The clash between plot and theme shows that Mr. Warren has not yet abandoned himself completely to the exigencies of his new subject, and is still approaching it, at least partially, with the techniques that were appropriate for his earlier works. Indeed, for this reader *World Enough and Time* called to mind another of Mr. Warren's transition novels, *At Heaven's Gate*—equally hybrid and tentative, equally filled with incomparable pages that no other American writer of his generation can match. It was at the end of *At Heaven's Gate,* in the sudden metamorphosis of Duckfoot Blake, that Mr. Warren found the combination of intellectual bravado, wise-guy cockiness and searching self-despair that formed the character of Jack Burden: the result was the masterly *All the King's Men.* Almost certainly, a similar process is taking place among the multiple facets of *World Enough and Time.*

In what direction will this process go? We can hardly anticipate the workings of the creative unconscious, but my own guess—for whatever it is worth—is that Mr. Warren may well move toward a freer use of symbolism. Evidences of this are already present in *World Enough and Time* as contrasted with his other books; and Mr. Warren, in his future work, may allow his magnificent rhetorical abilities to operate without being hampered by a razzle-dazzle intrigue or a psychological development that has to be internally portrayed. (It is unfortunate that the word "rhetorical" now has pejorative implications; we might remember that *Moby Dick* was the creation of a rhetorical writer.) In any case, despite its failure as an autonomous work, *World Enough and Time* is in a real sense a tribute to Mr. Warren's artistic integrity; for this has now compelled him to place in the foreground the immensely difficult but rewarding theme that has haunted the coulisses of his other books for many years. After all, it would have been so easy to rattle off another perfectly finished duplicate of *All the King's Men!*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

HERBERT READ

Jung at Mid-Century

ONE DAY AS WE SAT IN HIS STUDY overlooking the lake of Zürich, I asked Jung what had been the fundamental aim of all his life's work, and he answered simply: "I wanted to understand. . . . To understand is my only passion. But also I have a doctor's instinct. I want to help people when they are in pain. But to do that, I have to understand them."

Carl Gustave Jung is now in his 75th year. He has retired from practice as a psychotherapist, but his mind is so active, his faculties all still so keen, that he gives no impression of age. He is the son of a Protestant pastor, born in the village of Kesswill, in the canton of Thurgau, "in the year of the pig." That is Jung's own humorous comment, for in the Chinese calender the year 1875 is given this symbol, a symbol of darkness. As a child Jung noticed that the world was dark and obscure: the reality did not tally with the superficial explanations given him by his elders. There was the darkness of the past—a night in which untold races of men had lived and left their undeciphered traces: he would study archaeology. There was the darkness of language: different races speaking in different tongues, and many languages that men had once spoken had disappeared, leaving only traces in faded manuscripts and broken inscriptions—he would study philology. There was the darkness of life itself—the mystery of biological evolution of the human body, of the human mind. In this last region was the darkest mystery of all, and to this he would, in the end, devote all his inquisitive energy.

There is little wonder he had this bent in his nature. His ancestors for several generations on both sides of the family had been either theologians, seeking to solve the mystery of life by spiritual insight, or doctors, probing into the secrets of the body. His paternal grandfather, a German by birth, was a poet as well as a physician, who had had to leave his native country on account of his revolutionary sympathies, and had come to Basle with a recommendation from that great humanist Alexander von Humboldt. Here this ancestor became professor of anatomy and later founded the first asylum for the insane and the first institution for mentally-defective children. He married the daughter of an old Patrician family, and so did his son. It was to Basle that Jung himself came, at the early age of four, and Basle is the city where, so to speak, he wove together the two strands of his inheritance.

In Basle he went to school and college, and completed his medical studies. He had already discovered his particular bent and had been drawn to the psychiatrical side of medicine. In 1900 he became an assistant to the famous mental specialist Bleuler, who was in charge of the cantonal asylum and psy-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

chiatrical clinic at Zürich. Two years later he had completed his doctor's thesis—on "The Psychology and Pathology of so-called Occult Phenomena."[1]

In this first publication of nearly half a century ago Jung already foreshadows, not only certain theoretical concepts which we will mention later, but also two characteristics of his method—his choice of a subject-matter (in this case "the occult") which is dangerous in so far as it suggests that the author has some personal predilection for it; and at the same time a refusal to accept the current and mystifying label attached to this subject-matter—the phenomena are so-called occult, but will prove in the author's opinion to be within the scope of a scientific method, and as such explicable, understandable.

This early essay sets out from a consideration of those forms of hysteria that take the form of somnambulism (sleep-walking), but the main evidence is drawn from the analysis of a spiritualistic medium made by Jung in the years 1899 and 1900. This case was replete with psychological problems—far more than Jung could deal with at the time; but its importance lay in its challenge to accepted notions of the workings of the mind. The idea that part of the mind is unknown to us, below the level of consciousness, was not new, of course. Presentiments of it are present in Greek philosophy; Leibniz, Kant, Hartmann, Carus and Freud had suggested *the idea.* But Freud had made the idea a demonstrable fact, and though Jung did not meet Freud until 1906, he was from the first in friendly and fruitful relationship with the man and his work. The hypothesis of a dynamic unconscious is basic in this first essay of Jung's, but already Jung has taken a step beyond Freud's position. Having discussed all the essential features of the case significant for an understanding of the structure of the mind, Jung goes on to point out that "certain accompanying manifestations" must be mentioned and these, he fears, are sure to encounter "a not unjustifiable scepticism" in scientific circles. He calls this new material "unconscious additional creative work." By this phrase he meant to indicate the possibility that apart from the results of unconscious activity which can be explained in terms of ordinary associative processes, and by reference to the past history of the patient, there are other results (the "thought reading" of numbers, for example) which seem to depend on a state of receptivity in the unconscious greater than any known to conscious mental activity. In short, the unconscious has creative capacities beyond the range of the conscious. That was the suggestion forced on Jung by this case he observed as a young man of 24, and his life-work to a considerable extent has consisted in a substantiation of this early intuition. His patient had been unable to explain how she had acquired the knowledge stored in her unconscious. Jung, however, could discover a number of parallels in occultist and gnostic sources scattered throughout all kinds of works of different periods quite inaccessible to the patient. That paradox sent him on a journey of exploration which is not yet at an end.

[1]Jung did not come across the books of Freud until after the publication of this study.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There is a current misconception which sees in Jung an early disciple of Freud who subsequently deserted his master. Nothing could be more misleading. From the very beginning there was a difference of procedure and of outlook that was bound to lead to divergent results. Freud's work is based on a scientific method restricted to the principle of causality: that is to say, it is assumed that everything that happens has an explanation in prior causes, and is merely the result of those causes. The world is a mechanism that can be taken to pieces and we can only understand how it works if we know how to dismantle and reassemble its constituent parts. Jung does not deny this causal principle, but he says that it is inadequate to explain all the facts. In his view we live and work, day by day, according to the principle of directed aim or purpose, as well as by the principle of causality. We are drawn onwards and our actions are significant for a future we cannot foresee, and will only be explicable when the final effect of the impulse becomes evident. In other words, life has a *meaning* as well as an explanation; a meaning, moreover, that we can never finally discover, for it is being extended all the time by the process of evolution.

Is such an affirmation mystical? Not at all, Jung would say: it is merely the recognition of objective facts—awkward facts they may be for minds trained in the discipline of causal logic, but facts none the less. In this first carefully observed case of hysteria, it was already obvious that the unconscious, in the elaboration of systematic fantasies, followed certain patterns unknown to the waking consciousness, and that these patterns were not given by the facts of the case, but could nevertheless be related to patterns in other systems of thought and imagery. That is to say, the unconscious may be said to have an innate bias towards the formation of specific symbols, and these symbols have a significance which is more than personal—which is historical, racial, collective—at that time Jung could not say which.

But he affirmed the positive and super-personal value of the symbol, and already in that early act he chose a road that was not the road of Freud, who can only see in the symbol a sign or representation of the individual's primitive sexual tendencies. All symbols, in Freud's view, could be, *must be*, reduced to products of biological (specifically sexual) instincts. That may be their scientific explanation, replied Jung, but "causality is only one principle, and psychology essentially cannot be exhausted by causal methods only, because the mind lives by aims as well." We know that man cannot live by bread alone: nor even, Jung would add, from the energy generated by suppressed infantile desires for pleasure or power. Man must also possess *hope;* and hope, or belief in the purposive value of life, is a vital necessity. Because it is a vital necessity, the unconscious has created (over many thousands of years) symbolic images or moulds of thought by which the hopes and aspirations of mankind can be expressed and shaped. The symbol thus has an evolutionary function. "The further development of man," Jung has written, "can only be brought about

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

by means of symbols which represent something far in advance of himself, and whose intellectual meanings cannot yet be grasped entirely. The individual unconscious produces such symbols, and they are of the greatest possible value in the moral development of the personality."

This view, which threatened to reverse the scientific materialism of the nineteenth century, especially as it affected religious beliefs, has been bitterly opposed, not only by materialistic psychologists of the school of Freud, but by the whole of the positivistic and marxist trend in modern thought. Jung remained unperturbed, for he has no axe to grind, political or ecclesiastical. He remains objective. As for religion, he agrees with Cicero in deriving the word, not from "religare" (to bind fast, as the Church Fathers would have it) but from "relegere," which means to observe carefully, to look for hints and wait for hunches, and never seek to be dogmatic. It is not necessary to be a theologian to get those intimations: they come to all sorts and conditions of men, and to men, like St. Paul, who least expect them, or want them. They come, of course, from the unconscious, and our only clue to their nature and operations is the scientific study of dreams.

We may perhaps get a better notion of the function ascribed to the dream in Jung's psychology by looking at the whole process in reverse. We must imagine, then, a single continuous psychic process, as pervasive and universal as the cosmic process or "nature," and equally removed from our human scale of time and space. As individual persons we are "carriers" of this force —we depend on it very much in the same way as our bodies depend on air. We have to keep it under pressure, contained within a sensitive envelope, and it is only this envelope of which we are normally conscious, and which we present to our fellow-men. But we are not allowed to forget our dependence on this psychic force—we are not allowed to assume that we are self-sufficient and exclusively personal. So in certain states of inattention (day-dreaming, sleep, hysteria, etc.) the unconscious force is revealed to us, not as an individual possession but as impersonal, racial, even primitively animal. We call this revelation a dream, and as such it cannot only be explained with a psychology taken from individual consciousness. Again, it is only a hunch we get, for the dream is back and behind, dominating our psychic life: "we do not dream—we are dreamed." We submit to the dream, we are in part the creation of the our dreams, and the created cannot fully understand the purpose of the creator. "The dream is a mysterious message from our night-aspect"—from the darkness that we strive to understand. It is never, as the Freudians would argue, fully explicable in terms of our reason, or of our instinctive drives. Jung reiterates: it has a purpose which does not necessarily correspond with the purposes of the conscious mind and causality. It follows that there can be no *standard* symbols, good for all dreams, as there are in Freudian psychology, for the purpose of the dream will vary with every individual and every situation. There is always a compensatory relation between the conscious situation of the dreamer and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the dream, and dream interpretation can only proceed if we have the requisite knowledge of the conscious situation. It is always helpful, says Jung, when we set out to interpret a dream, to ask: "what conscious attitude does it compensate?" There is a language of dreams and it has certain "roots" in the past, but it is a language that has become full of inflexions, complex and subtle. The task of interpretation is bound to be difficult but it is nevertheless an essential part of psychotherapy.

The dream is not an isolated event; it is part of a continuous unconscious mental process which by chance we interrupt, and succeed in bringing to consciousness. For that reason it is important to study dreams in series: they are connected by unconscious threads of meaning, and perhaps the analyst, by taking readings at various points, can guess the lines of communication. He may find that they cross at a certain point, which becomes the "centre" of significance. Once such a centre is established, the task of interpretation becomes immensely simplified.

But not complete. At the centre of significance may be a symbol, and again Jung is too cautious to give such symbols a simple equivalence in our conscious life. "The dream speaks in images, and gives expression to instincts, that are derived from the most primitive levels of nature." We may not be able to interpret such images in our conscious sophisticated language. But we can recognize them for what they are, messages from another psychic layer, and we can assimilate them, make them our familiars. We shall find their parallels in our myths and fairy tales, even in popular fiction and pictorial art. Sometimes they signify positive forces, the forces of life, the power of healing and of fertility; sometimes negative forces, the forces of self-destruction and death. Contrary to Freud, who regards the unconscious as a depository of evil forces, Jung treats it as "that really very natural thing." "The unconscious," he says, "is not a demonic monster, but a thing of nature that is perfectly neutral as far as moral sense, aesthetic taste and intellectual judgment go. It is dangerous only when our conscious attitude towards it becomes hopelessly false. And this danger grows in the measure that we practise repressions."

Elsewhere he has given an example of this danger—the Nazi cult of collective forces, of tribal gods, of men of demonic power. Nobody saw the significance of the rise of Nazism as clearly as Jung; nobody gave such clear warnings. His voice was ignored and afterwards his clear understanding of the situation was misconstrued as a sympathetic attitude towards it! The physician must be the carrier of the disease he would cure; the prophet must be stoned for daring to prophesy war and pestilence!

But to return to the dream. Jung as a scientist has not found it possible to explain the unconscious by the rigid laws of causality. It had been Freud's tendency to regard the unconscious as an empty pit or "cauldron" which each individual gradually fills as he grows up and adapts himself to a hostile world. Envy and hatred of the father, sexually possessive feelings towards the mother,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

love of its own excrements—these and many other frustrated instincts are the material out of which the unconscious, according to Freud, is principally fashioned. His illusion, according to Jung, was to believe that what had in this manner been filled, could, by some technique of analysis, be emptied; it is true that towards the end of his career Freud began to speak of man's archaic heritage, of "inherited trends," which could not be got rid of, of "some primeval phylogenetic experience" which each child is destined to repeat. But that concession was not supported by any extensive evidence that Freud cared to publish, and it is doubtful if he would ever have come to regard the unconscious as possessing "possibilities of wisdom that are completely closed to consciousness," as having at its disposal "the wisdom of untold ages, deposited in the course of time and lying potential in the human brain." It was left to Jung to elaborate a theory of this kind, which he has called the theory of the archetype, and some explanation of this term is essential in any account of Jung's psychology.

We have already seen that in his first published case history Jung was driven to the conclusion that the unconscious, in the elaboration of its fantasies, follows, as it were, certain well-worn tracks. There is some kind of predetermined pattern which the individual unconscious falls into, like jelly into a mould. The fantasy, the process of fabulation, "sets" along defined lines. To this predetermined stress in the unconscious Jung gives the name *archetype*.

It is important to realize that the archetype is not a ready-made image. It is merely an inherited predisposition or tendency to fabricate definite types of imagery; certain lines of force along which the imagery in the unconscious will "automatically" arrange itself. It may be that the unconscious will "automatically" rely on certain symbols—the mother, the horse, the phallus, etc.; or that its dramatic constructions (our dreams) will follow the formulas we find embedded in ancient mythology. In any case, the evidence Jung derived from his own clinical experience, as well as from his reading in religious and mystical literature, anthropology and folklore, convinced him of the existence of such patterns of symbolic expression, and a large part of his work consists of an elaboration and consideration of this hypothesis.

The division of the mental personality into two contrary forces—conscious and unconscious—corresponds with a polarity that runs throughout nature and history. The positive and negative fields of electro-magnetism, the male and female sexes, good and evil—everywhere we are confronted with pairs of opposites. The dialectic of the life process is based upon this fact, yet in our conscious practical life we try to hide it. We think of ourselves as single in consciousness, of one sex, and generally as wholly good in intentions. But this illusion of unity does not correspond with the reality. Not only has psychotherapy proved that our mind is divided into levels or processes opposed to each other, but this opposition, Jung has shown, is expressed in recognizable ways. Such "ways of expression" are the archetypes, unknown and perhaps unknowable in their unconscious existence. Inasmuch as they arrange repre-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sentations in consciousness, they become perceptible. Among them we can distinguish two that are of universal significance. The first Jung has called the Shadow: it is the personification of all that we do not admit about ourselves, our "other aspect," our "dark brother," and since we do not like consciously to own this disreputable side of our nature, we think of it as outside ourselves, and we create images (archetypes) like Satan, or Caliban, or Mr. Hyde, or Adolf Hitler, to represent our other self. The process of what Jung calls "individuation," a process of coming to terms with oneself and striking a balance among our conflicting impulses, is at first largely a question of becoming aware of our Shadow and accepting this inevitable presence. We can make no progress towards mental health until we become fully conscious of this other self and accept it as part of the total reality of our being.

Another such archetype is the "soul-image," the reflection of the opposite sex which each of us, in varying degrees of intensity, carries in our unconscious. The male carries an "anima," or female image; the female an "animus" or male image. "Everyman carries his Eve in himself," says an old alchemical sentence. But in practice again we project the image—we seek its counterpart among our fellow human-beings, and woe to the man or woman who makes a wrong choice!

Jung took a further step beyond all contemporary psychology when he recognized in certain religious images of the past archetypes unconsciously designed to help the struggling soul towards fulfilment, or wholeness. These images, or *unifying symbols,* take different forms in different religions, but are all essentially the same. One of the most frequent of this kind is the mandala, or "magic circle." In the East it is used as aid to contemplation. Generally it consists of an intricate pattern in the form of a flower, a cross, or a wheel, with a tendency to four-fold arrangement. A Buddhist mandala, for example, will take the form of a highly stylised sacred building with four gates, within which is the lotus, with a figure of Shiva or some other divinity at the centre. At the four cardinal points are the four gateways to knowledge and beyond this an enclosing circle, the horrors of the burial ground. In Christian iconography Christ is often represented within a circle or almond-shaped compartment, enclosed in a square whose spandrels are occupied by the symbols of the four Evangelists. The infinite variations of the Christian cross in Celtic, Carolingian and Gothic art are further illustrations of the expression of this archetypal symbol.

Another and more recent discovery of Jung's reveals the significance of ancient alchemy. The alchemists were apparently concerned with the transmutation of base metals into precious metals, for example, lead to gold; but in their secret writings and recipes, they used a symbolism which was derived from the unconscious, and Jung has shown that this symbolism actually represents the transformation of the personality through the mixing and joining together of noble and base constituents, of elements drawn from the conscious and unconscious. The gold sought was not the substance which is "at the root of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

all evil," but rather philosophic gold, the elixir of life. In alchemical representations it becomes a symbol comparable with the Golden Flower of oriental mysticism, and alchemical experiments have their analogy in Yoga and other mythical practices.

What all these researches lead to is an affirmation of religious symbolism, a proof of its necessity in the development of the psyche. At this point one should remember that Jung is first and foremost a scientist. His aim has never been to set out to substantiate "religion." His aim has been to make sick people well again, and in the clinical experience of "curing their souls," he has discovered that the symbol is not the arbitrary creation of mystics and poets, but a concrete psychological reality, as necessary to psychological health or wholeness as oxygen is to physical health and wholeness. The unconscious, in its general or collective aspect, is an organic system of such symbols, and we are only at the beginning of our understanding of its vast and complicated workings. It is permissible, for those who can make the leap into faith, to believe that these symbols are evidences of the living and transcendent God; but Jung himself has not, so far as we know, made that leap. He remains the scientist, the spectator *ab extra*, and though he may lead his patients to the threshold of the Church, the decision to cross or not to cross it must be their own. All that Jung shows to the patient (and in this sick world we are all potential patients) is that in one way or another we have to return to our roots, to abandon our adolescent longing for uprooted independence, our protest against instinctual bonds, our intellectual pride. We have to learn that we are part of a process, leaves on the Tree of Life. But the way back to integration, involving as it does a coming-to-terms with the collective psyche, is not easy, and is perhaps never wholly secure. It depends on a factor which Jung has not hesitated to call "moral"—on the recognition of a direction in life and on a certain faithfulness to oneself. "Being analyzed" is no cure in itself—that way lies deception and self-delusion, and an opportunity for the charlatan. Jung has always been severe with his patients. He does not promise to rid them of their neuroses, to banish their bad dreams, or even cure their complexes. On the contrary, these are the symptoms which the patient must learn to observe for himself: a psychic barometer to be read whenever he wants to know his mental climate. The art—and health is an art—lies in this reading, in this weather-wisdom.

Such a view of man's psyche has many repercussions in philosophy, and especially in political philosophy. It is true that Jung has repeatedly emphasized that re-integration is an individual process—it is up to each man to save his own soul. But the diagnosis of our age that he has made leads to certain broad conclusions of a political nature, and Jung has not hesitated to express them. "We are living in times of great disruption," he has declared; "political passions are aflame, internal upheavals have brought nations to the brink of chaos, and the very foundations of our *Weltanschauung* are shattered. This critical state of things has such a tremendous influence on the psychic life of the individual that the doctor is bound to follow its effect on the individual psyche with

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more than usual attention. The storm of actual events does not only sweep down upon him from the great world outside; he feels the violence of its impact even in the quiet of his consulting room and in the privacy of the medical consultation. As he has a responsibility towards his patients, he cannot afford to withdraw to the peaceful island of undisturbed scientific work, but must constantly descend into the arena of world events, in order to join in the battle of conflicting passions and opinions. Were he to remain aloof from the tumult, the calamity of his time would only reach him vaguely from afar, and his patients' suffering would find neither ear nor understanding."

Jung has realized, with every considerable psychologist of our time, that the crowd or the mass develops a psychological force of its own. In the crowd the individual loses his identity, not only physically, but also spiritually, and what merges, and emerges as crowd psychology, is the irrational side of the collective unconscious. We freely admit such a possibility when confronted with the barbarian horde, or the riotous mob. What we do not so readily recognize is that the individual, in that mass-organization which we call the State, has dwindled away to mere nothingness. He has surrendered his power of decision, his social responsibility, and finds himself a rivet (not even a cog!) in a machine whose movements and direction he has no power to control. That might not matter if he could be assured that exceptionally wise and gifted individuals were in control, but in effect every man is similarly riveted, similarly powerless, and what motivates the machine is a demonic force issuing directly from the collective unconscious. No other hypothesis can explain the release against mankind itself of the terrifying weapons of destruction now in the possession of world States.

Freud, as is well-known, was wholly pessimistic about the future of mankind. The death instinct drives us on, and the only end is the universal destruction of life. But Jung does not agree with him. The unconscious, he says, does not believe in death. There is a *libido,* a general urge to life, and it is true that this urge can be split, so that it works against itself. But fundamentally it seeks to flow onwards, to gather force and intensity. That fundamental characteristic of the libido allows us to hope that mankind will become aware of the threat to its existence before it is too late. We must *dare* to hope, and it is the daring rather than the hope that will carry us through. But the means, for Jung, is still the integration of the individual personality. The group, the party, the nation, the union of nations, because of their unconsciousness, have no freedom of choice. Within such collectives, psychic powers work themselves out as if by an unconscious law of life. "There is set going a causally connected process that comes to rest only in catastrophe." The epoch, Jung thinks, calls for the liberating personality, "for the one who distinguishes himself from the inescapable power of collectivity . . . who lights a hopeful watchfire announcing to others that at least *one* man has succeeded in escaping the fateful identity with the group soul."

This distinction between the leader who (like Hitler) is the expression of unconscious forces that are evil and demonic, and the leader who has stood

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

apart and avoided the general panic, is perhaps easier to draw in theory than in practice. Jung admits the difficulty. "There are times in the history of the world (our own may be one of them) when something that is good must make way; what is destined to be better thus appears at first to be evil. This last sentence shows how dangerous it is even to touch on these problems, for how easy it would be, according to this, for evil to smuggle itself in by simply explaining that it is the potentially better!" But the risk must be run, and Jung reminds us how, in myth and legend, the life of the infant hero is always threatened—the serpents and Hera threatened to destroy Hercules, and only by a miracle did Jesus escape from the slaying of the first-born in Bethlehem. Life would become meaningless if it were deprived of its tragic element, for it is danger and desperation that generate the intense awareness, the finer consciousness, that carry life to ever higher manifestations. The "way" to this new dimension of existence must be discovered. Each of the great religions has been a journey of exploration, and each has its symbol of the pilgrim's progress along this way. The Chinese call it *Tao,* and Jung often speaks with admiration of the wisdom of this ancient philosophy.

As we sat, on that day already mentioned, looking across the still lake, under the cloudless sky, Jung related the story of the Rainmaker, as told to him by Professor Richard Wilhelm, the famous Chinese scholar. There had been a terrible drought in Kiou Chou and a man from Shantung was sent for, of whom it was said that he could make rain. When he arrived he asked for a little hut to be built for him outside the town. When it was ready he retired into it and asked not to be disturbed. He stayed in his hut for three days and three nights and on the morning of the fourth day a snow-storm broke out such as had never been seen at this time of the year.

When Prof. Wilhelm heard this he went out to the man and asked him how he had set about to make that snow. The man answered that he had not made it. It was simply that he came from Shantung where everything was right. Here in Kiou Chou heaven and earth were separated, everything was wrong and it took him three days to become right again himself. But as soon as he was right rain or snow would naturally fall.

Tao, Jung explained, is meaningful coincidence in time—when heaven and earth are working together properly, then things are all right, everything has its due place and function.

Like most Chinese stories, at first it seems too simple and pointless, but the meaning grows as we meditate upon it. The inactivity it seems to advocate is merely external. The invisible spheres revolve, and at a certain point in time, they coincide, and at that moment we find ourselves in harmony with nature. At such times things happen as we wish them to happen: we are instruments of the divine power, vessels filled with grace. That is the full meaning of *integration* in Jung's psychology, and he believes that the world will be saved, if it is saved at all, by integrated personalities.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

RACHEL FRANK

Cézanne and Redon

It is tempting for an artist who has something to say to become maladjusted to history. If he submits to this temptation, he will tend to reject painters whose sensibility is foreign to him, and retain only those whose work announces, in some fashion, his own. In this respect, Cézanne was modest. "To my mind one should not substitute oneself for the past, one has merely to add a new link."[1] Although he chose the Venetians and the Spaniards for his models ("You know the greatest painters better than I do; the Venetians and the Spaniards") returning again and again to Tintoretto, his taste was sufficiently capacious to admit artists testifying to modes of experience different from his own. Without being untrue to his own bent, he can write of Delacroix that he admires him "from the heart."

Yet, towards his own time, he is a ferocious example of maladjustment, whom the teachers in the Ecole des Beaux Arts dutifully warn their students never to imitate. Ironically, Cézanne would have agreed with them, but for a different reason; not that it was better to imitate Ingres, but that the best painting—even his own—can only serve as a directive, for the artist must find his own way, according to his own mode of sensibility. "Whoever the master is whom you prefer, this must only be a directive for you . . . advice, the methods of another must not make you change your own manner of feeling." He rejects his contemporaries; they love themselves more than a new inroad into existence, and are, to be sure, well-adjusted, since they look upon him as a rival rather than a giver, as though every addition made to cultural wealth were a robbery rather than an exultant act of generosity by one who can act in no other way. Yet he singles out Monet and Renoir for special appreciation, and, strangely, Odilon Redon.

We can guess why he favors Monet. Monet broke with the atelier, looked at nature in the midst of nature, stepped up his colors, and threw out line as a distraction to the colorist. And Renoir would interest him as a painter who, unlike Monet, did not give up contour for the sake of luminosity, managing to keep both. But when Cézanne writes to Emile Bernard, "I have already told you that I like Redon's talent enormously," one wonders whether this is a tribute to an essentially alien gift, or whether, without our yoking them by violence together, we may not discover some natural affinity between them.

Let it be said immediately: their differences are so striking, that it would seem unlikely for a single sensibility to span the work of both with equal enjoyment. In a Cézanne landscape the eyes walk up space along color-steps. The effort of mounting each time increases our sense of achievement. By the time

[1]All quotations attributed to Cézanne are taken from his *Letters*, B. Cassirer, London 1941, translated by Marguerite Kay.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

we have reached the frame, we are at the summit of space, can look down upon it as a tangible challenge we have overcome with difficulty, and be happy at its submission. For Cézanne, then, space is unreal unless it is everywhere occupied; its substance must be changed into something solid which can be climbed like Mont St. Victoire. Redon, on the other hand, is a lyricist of emanations. Instead of studying nature, he seems to shut his eyes before it and take a dream for a model. His flowers emerge from some dark hot-house of the spirit, and above them grows a head mysteriously of them yet weighted by the enigmas of higher consciousness. For Cézanne a landscape is God's immaculate architecture, "the spectacle that the Pater Omnipotens Aeterne spreads out before our eyes." Human figures are no more a part of this architecture than trees. But when Redon paints a landscape, flowers and butterflies breathe through it anarchically disregarding structure; and, as if the sheer color formations of the sky were not spectacular enough in themselves, against them may loom the grotesque head of a Cyclops, almost as a fearful child might have imagined it—idiotic, connected to nothing, huge as a demi-god or demon. Compared to Cézanne, for whom nature is the stable point of departure and the stable end of fulfillment, nature, in Redon, seems a shifting backdrop for the vagaries of his sensibility.

We shall not say that Cézanne is classical, Redon romantic, or that Cézanne is impersonal and Redon personal. It may be remembered that before Cézanne was understood, the general notion of his work was that it was as private as any madman's. Only when he was able to articulate his method and account for it theoretically did it become communal, public—that is to say, understood. Nor was Cézanne's impulse to theorize about his work either a usurpation of the critic's function or a sign that he was artistically impure. He theorized to make himself clear to himself, as well as to his students, so that when he or others drank his work, the quality might be pure, and known for what it was.

Cézanne's statements are already a part of the abstractionist movements which took flight from his notes on the plane. But it may perhaps be less well-known that Odilon Redon, for all the instinctive air of his work, which one normally tends to look upon as eccentric, fantastic, morbid—in short, the opposite of universal—was extraordinarily articulate and stubborn about the quality of his own painting. And just as the abstractionists forgot the whole Cézanne, and used only that side of his work which touched on the development of their particular method, so the surrealists, in their revolt against consciousness, swooped down upon the gentle Redon, carrying away all that would defend their thesis, and leaving the rest to rot.

Apart from his letters (Paris, 1923) Redon left a journal filled with some of the most perceptive reflections on art that are to be found among artists or critics. Between the time when he left the Ecole des Beaux Arts (where he could not accommodate himself to the prevailing maladjustment of the spirit) until he retired to do full-time work as an artist, he wrote criticism for an art journal. His comments were so exceptional that Fromentin took eager notice of them.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

His journal, called *A Soi-Même* (1867-1915, Paris, 1922) is at once the autobiography of his development and the revelation of a man who tries to live by the highest values. Unlike the bitter, patient Cézanne—who also lived by the highest values—Redon's typical mood, when he writes, is rhapsodic. But let us not forget that the painterly Cézanne spoke over and over again of his own passion for the "contours of the land" at Aix, and believed with Redon that passion was the necessary ingredient for creativity.

Like Cézanne, Redon was married, had a child, and lived in solitude, not as a diabolical rebel against social form, an "escapist," a misfit or a mocker, but as one who meets the only struggle possible to him face to face. "I have been led to the isolation in which I am by the absolute impossibility of pursuing my art in any other way than the one in which I have always done so."[2] He calls himself a "democratic aristocrat"; he loves the best in his own culture and in other cultures, but not at the expense of the people; he loves the people, but not at the expense of the best in culture. As an adolescent, he visits the churches which are more popular than formal because, he writes, religious feeling in such places is freshly felt. He criticizes the art of Moreau because it is too gross in its externality, and he opposes its worldliness to the sincerity of the truest art. "Would these beings come out of the canvas to act on the observer? (*pour agir?*) No. They are caught in a rhetoric of the eye. In its way, obviously, this does have undoubted beauty. But it is not the [experience of that] eternity in which humanity looks at itself endlessly again and again."

We begin to see that Redon's starting-point is not an infatuation with his medium. "In sum," he writes of Moreau, "he did not strive from an inward source; we know nothing of his moral life."

How does Cézanne's attitude compare with Redon's? Strangely, he does not start with an obsession for his medium either. He starts with an experience—"the strong experience of nature"—felt religiously as "the spectacle that the Pater Omnipotens Aeterne spreads out before our eyes." And then we find him drawing upon that musty reserve of scholars and philosophers so often scorned by lesser artists as meaningless—"truth and learning"—in short, a message.

"I have still got to work not so as to be able to add the final polish, which is for the admiration of imbeciles. And the thing that is commonly so much appreciated is merely the reality of the handwork and renders all work resulting from it inartistic and common. I must strive after perfection only for the pleasure of giving added truth and learning."

What did Redon mean by morality? What did Cézanne mean by truth and learning? We can at least be sure both of them meant that by looking at their work a person must not merely enjoy himself; he must come away a more perceptive person. In this respect art is a chastener, and, at his best, the artist is a craftsman of the spirit through his medium. Cézanne writes, ". . . I am still searching for the expression of those confused sensations that we bring with

[2] I have translated the quotations from the French.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

us at birth." In art he is looking for a higher order which will resolve these confusions. Redon writes of a Parisian he has met, "He has a readiness to understand everything, but it is for pleasure rather than for truth." Of his own work he writes that it has been formed "according to the law of life and of the moral transmission necessary to all that exists. . . ." and elsewhere refers to "the products of the spirit and of art, that is to say man's moral culture." Essentially, both Cézanne and Redon were alike in this: both believed that, given the necessary abundance of feeling, an inner urgency of the spirit from which meaning might come forth was a higher good than a passion for the medium as an end in itself. For them the word *medium* keeps its original significance of *means*.

Redon's human faces express good-will rising to ecstasy, inner peace energized into love, and presuppose a state of being in the painter which neither gay colors nor technical tumbletricks can simulate. Throughout his journal Redon strives for a state of the spirit; it is this which he wishes to transmit to others, so that they, by absorbing his work, may become emotionally purified. Redon writes that the luckiest artists—those who surpass their own will and are given more than they ask for—are the ones who are "entirely sincere and carry in themselves something more than their art only." And he adds that artists need the desire for truth, and perhaps the gift of sympathy or the suffering which this entails.

Both Redon and Cézanne, then, start with deep inner feeling which grows into specified experience. Cézanne's experience is the spectacle of external nature felt in a unique way as belonging to God. Redon's experience, though it may be stimulated by external nature—and he writes that it is—can only mature in the hibernation of his inner being. Both are less interested in pleasing than in transmitting an implicit message.

If we take Longinus' definition of the sublime in its primary effect of elevation, it can be shown that Cézanne achieves this effect. The way in which this elevation is to be achieved, piercing everything "like a flash of lightning" comes closer to Redon's method than Cézanne's, which starts by slow persuasion and ends in a sweat of triumph. Longinus was writing on literature, of course, not painting. We are using his definition of the term because it offers itself as a convenient point of departure for trying to understand Cézanne and Redon freshly, without the layers of preconception deposited by the movements which followed them.

The difference between Redon and the surrealists is similar to the one which might be said to exist between Blake and the surrealists. Blake and Redon both feel that they are instruments played by some force more knowing than themselves. ". . . One does not make the kind of art which one wishes to make. The artist is . . . the receptacle of surrounding things; from the outside he receives sensations which he transforms in a fatal way, stubbornly and inexorably according to himself alone." Unlike the surrealists, however, who lean so heavily for their effect upon common-sense turned on its head—that is, on the mere

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

shock of the inverisimilar, the mere unlikelihood of dream, Redon, depending on what is presented to him spontaneously, accepts only what he can elevate into the sublime. Mere fantasy, the mere imitation of the dream, is not enough. The matter of fantasy must undergo a chastening process in which it rises to a height which thought, *la pensée*, approves. Now where Blake achieves sublimity through exaltation, a full-blown line, Redon achieves it through suggestion. "Suggestive art is like a radiation of things along the dream towards which thought also proceeds." For Redon, then, form would be a kind of invocation to the shifting world of the implicit. And, as Cézanne chooses his historical forbears among the Venetians and the Spaniards, Redon aligns himself with Da Vinci and Rembrandt. "That composition flows naturally and easily from the vision of the mysterious world of shadows whose secret Rembrandt revealed to us. . . . Ah! Did they (the shadows) ever achieve a higher effect than the one to be found in Da Vinci's work! To them is due the mystery and the richness of fascination which it exercises on our spirit."

Shadow and line, then, are Redon's chief resources, for it is by means of these that he may arrive at "the ambiguous world of the indeterminate" which is the center of his experience. When Redon writes of Rembrandt that he "put moral life into shadows," he means that Rembrandt's experience of right and wrong was not a thing, like a handkerchief, that stayed in the pocket of his coat when he hung it up in the closet, before getting down to work. For the purpose of clarity in discourse, art is usually separated from morality. But emotional experience makes no distinctions among realms of discourse, and there the moral factor enters as an ingredient which is felt as a visual flavor rather than stated. Rembrandt's world of visual reality was not a substitute for morality, but the finest possible expression of it as it diffused itself through his being.

Just as Rembrandt gave moral life to shadow, it may be said that Cézanne gave moral life to color. We must, however, dispose of the notion that Cézanne outlawed line from the realm of oil painting. The legend that there is no line in nature doubtless arose from Cézanne's preoccupation with his own vision. Not to see line meant really not to see outline, the leveller of contour. For Cézanne outline would enforce the emptiness of space unoccupied in rising to fulfillment at every point, and would be a mere boundary of hollowness. Outline would devalue Cézanne's slow joy in the contour of the land instead of praising it by capturing its analogy. It has often been observed of Cézanne that his persistent tussling with color as if it were brick was the compensation of a man who could not draw. And, while it is unfair to chide a great painter for not achieving a quality to which he does not sincerely respond and therefore aspire, it is equally important to guard against the kind of enthusiasm which would seem to deify a master's weakness merely by calling it strength.

An artist like Redon could feel line as a nerve awaking space. Cézanne could not feel line in this way; line as a free, lyrical emission is alien to his sensibility. When Cézanne copies museum statues they are indeed outlines—mummified summaries immune to the fluid contagion of their subjects.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But Cézanne did keep line; only he gave it a function different from outline or lyrical expression, namely that of creating space. With Cézanne line remains as much a molder of space as color was to become. It could create both breadth and depth. "Lines parallel to the horizon give breadth. . . . Lines perpendicular to this horizon give depth." And Cézanne, as we may guess, gave "morality" to color by making it a component of contour which grows into architecture. Unlike Cézanne, Redon is less a builder than a singer, whose line plunges into space as its habitat.

Both their strivings were significant, ultimately, as attempts to avoid academicism and to transcend impressionism, to make their work more than a document of appearances. For Cézanne, the plane becomes the vertebra of color, retrieving it from the uncertain flux. Redon cannot follow this formula, because what it gains in bulk it loses in quiveringness. For him the impressionists are too much "parasites of the object," and ignore inward states of feeling. He therefore goes back behind the impressionists to the masters of chiaroscuro, and gives up much of the gaiety of color for a path which will take him to that tremulous evanescence lying between flux and an imperfectly grasped state of permanence. From this point of view, colors are not material with which to build, but are apt to be a disguise of the reality which Redon experiences as basic. "Black is the most essential color. . . . It doesn't please the eye and awakes no sensuality. It is much more the agent of the spirit than the pretty color of the palette or the prism. . . . Pencil is no longer appreciated at all. . . ."

A good friend of Mallarmé, Redon spoke often of "correspondences," the symbolist term for metaphorical equivalences of spiritual states, pointing to mysterious realms of being which transcended the known world. Remy de Gourmont praised Redon's work as a kind of metaphor, a transposition of the poetic to the visual sphere. Yet his own description of his contribution is the most precise one we have. "One cannot take from me the merit of giving the illusion of life to my most unreal creations. All my originality, then, consists in making inverisimilar beings live according to the human laws of the verisimilar by placing the logic of the visible at the service of the invisible."

More than surrealist, as we have seen, Redon's work floats up beyond that arbitrary world where any fantasy is sacred which comes from the subconscious. His images, so delicate that they seem about to take off from his canvas and float off into some half-known space, are at the same time held there in trance. Unlike Redon, who must wait for the surprise, Cézanne labors towards the inevitable. We have said that Cézanne gave "morality" to color; yet he is different from the abstractionists in that he never deserted his subject, but rather tried to be worthy of it. His great subject is always there; it is a mountain, and even an apple is a mountain; everything must be climbed as if it were Mont St. Victoire, and at the summit of everything is, indeed, the exhilaration of hard victory. Each of these painters, then, in his own way, attained that elevation which we feel to be the sublime. Nor is this strange, for each began not as a worshipper of his medium, but as a worshipper of the universe.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FREDERICK MORGAN

Theater Chronicle

BILLY BUDD, the new play[1] by Louis O. Coxe and Robert Chapman, is at once a good play in its own right and an interesting partial interpretation of the great and mysterious novel on which it is based. Both points are of importance, as indications of what has been achieved by the playwrights—they are more than mere adaptors here—and of the limitations on this achievement.

The task they set themselves was not an easy one. The novel offers few handles for an obviously dramatic treatment. Perhaps for this very reason the playwrights were forced to think through the ideas suggested to them by the novel and to start from scratch in giving them dramatic form. At any rate, this is a play that has been worked through from the beginning; not, like *Darkness at Noon*, an easy carrying over into dramatic form of material already available in the novel. The first job was to give realistic substance to the literal situation of the play, and in this the authors have been admirably successful. The concrete details of life aboard a man-of-war at the close of the eighteenth century, the talk of the sailors, the dramatization of naval routine—all is presented intelligently and convincingly, with complete fidelity of tone. The playwrights have even been successful in interpolating a very amusing scene in which a cocky midshipman receives his come-uppance.

The second job was to account in dramatic terms for the motivations of the characters. Here the playwrights, in my opinion, were forced into a partial interpretation of the novel in order to develop one of its aspects. This was necessary in that the entire symbolic power of Melville's book could not be brought over in full in a dramatized version. In effect, this is a problem play, one that grips us in terms of intellectual alternatives; the magic of the novel, its quality of revelation and of sacramental power, are to a large extent lost. Thus with the character of Claggart: the natural depravity which he represents takes on infinite resonance in the novel through the indirections of Melville's style and presentation. In the play, to be made dramatically comprehensible, he must be rationalized and humanized. The Claggart of the play is a complicated and suffering man who suggests the mystery of evil but does not embody it in his own person. The difference is similar in the case of Captain Vere and his determination to uphold the order which he serves. In the novel, it is felt as inevitable, from the moment of Claggart's death, that Billy must hang.[2] This sense of predestination gives tragic dignity to Vere's predicament and prepares beautifully for the huge reconciliations at the close. In the play

[1]Published by Princeton University Press. $1.50.

[2]In the novel Vere says: "Struck dead by an angel of God. Yet the angel must hang!" In the play: "Struck dead by the Angel of God . . . and I must judge the Angel. Can I save him? Have I that choice?" The change is crucial.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

we have an intellectualized situation that is much less austere and inevitable, and that takes hold of us largely on the simple level of suspense: what will happen next? In the court-martial scene, Billy is about to be acquitted; then, in a sudden reversal, Vere turns to the court and persuades them to face to the limit the consequences of their position. In the course of this scene, the audience comes perilously close to losing its sympathy for Vere altogether. It is too much as if he were mechanically insisting on the letter of the law. This insistence is present in Melville, but within a larger context.

The play, then, loses many of the reverberations which make the original work a great one. It loses the added dimensions given to the novel by Melville's commentaries and asides. It narrows down motivations within a naturalistic framework, suggesting mysteries that lie beyond but without bringing as much to bear on them as Melville was able to. But within these limitations it is an intelligent and honest piece of work, and to suggest that its authors did not have the vision or grasp of their model is surely no great disparagement. The performances in this production by Chandler Cowles and Anthony B. Farrell were uniformly excellent. Dennis King made a fine Captain Vere, and Charles Nolte was outstandingly strong and sympathetic as Billy.

Edmund Wilson's *The Little Blue Light*[3], which was presented by ANTA for a two week run, deals with an old-fashioned liberal, a magazine publisher who attempts, from the seclusion of his country home, to remain faithful to his ideas in the America of the "not-remote future." The political life of the nation is seen as dominated by various pressure groups; freedom of the press is almost a thing of the past. It is the old story of an individual fighting for the rights of individuals in a totalitarian environment. During the course of the play a new pressure group comes to the fore, more sinister than the others because totally without program and shunning publicity, dedicated to power alone. The publisher is finally crushed by this evil force. The title of the play refers both to the instrument of assassination and to a permanent obsession in the mind of one of the characters.

Disappointingly, this is a slipshod and unimaginative piece of work. Dramatically, the play is inert and lifeless; intellectually—and this is surprising—it is third-rate. The menacing political situaton is never objectified; it is simply talked about in a language that uses all the worst clichés of contemporary liberalism. And the various domestic problems of the publisher are never brought to a point or put into relevant relationship with the political theme. It is rather as if Mr. Wilson had thrown together some of his pet ideas and prejudices and hoped that somehow they would turn into a play. The result has little imaginative life and in its New Yorkerish tone suggests that Mr. Wilson is spiritually not as far removed from that magazine as some have supposed.

Earlier in the spring ANTA did us a better service in presenting Louis Jouvet and his company in a production of *L'Ecole des femmes*. This production indicated, better than anything that has appeared in New York since Gielgud's

[3]Published by Farrar, Straus. $2.75.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Importance of Being Earnest, exactly how much can be accomplished by a company trained in a living tradition of the theatre. This performance was a triumph of tone. The great wit and humor of the play were never allowed to deteriorate into slapstick, nor did its formality petrify into solemnity. The stage set was a delight: a walled-garden in the center which could open out as the scene demanded, with porticoes on the sides and a tower overlooking it at the rear. The formalized verse was spoken with elegance and verve, and despite the lack of superficial action in the play, the audience was always conscious of movement and flow, in the speaking of the lines and in the reactions of the characters to one another. The American theatre still has to learn that a play can be enormously exciting without sensationalism and unnecessary running-about. In this advanced art of performing, which we shall not attain until we have a permanent repertory theatre, every gesture, every movement, every inflction of voice bore intimate relation to the essential qualities of the masterpiece.

By contrast, the recent Dwight Deere Wiman production of *Romeo and Juliet* seemed amateurish, despite some good points. The play was presented virtually uncut, the action was kept moving, and the scenes of duelling were splendidly presented. There was an excellent Tybalt (William Smithers) and a fine Friar Laurence (James Hayter), but the actors in the leading roles were largely ineffective. Olivia de Havilland should have been a reasonably good Juliet. If she lacks the verve and fire that one would like to see in the part, she is at least charming and dignified and has a lovely voice. Unfortunately, she used her voice at critical moments in the worst possible way, as though she were overly impressed by the fact that she was speaking great poetry. The result was affectation and falsity in the balcony scene, the death scene and other big moments, although she was good in the more casual episodes. The Romeo of Douglas Watson was a rather thin portrayal, excessively frail and lacking in authority. As Mercutio, Jack Hawkins was good in a role that can always command the sympathy of the audience.

With the exception of one act of *Billion Dollar Baby* in 1947, I have not enjoyed any part of a musical comedy since well before the war. The genre seems to have fallen into a bad decline, largely due to the influence of *Oklahoma* and other pretentious and pseudo-serious works. The old-fashioned musical comedy, based on a few easily grasped conventions, was strong in that it sprang directly from realities of American life. Never profound, never intended to survive its time, it could nevertheless be lively, fast and consistently entertaining. With *Guys and Dolls*, I am pleased to report, we seem to have a throwback to this native American form. The setting is Broadway and environs. The plot, which is of no importance, involves various small time gamblers and racetrack touts and a conventional pure heroine—in this case a Salvation Army girl. The show has tremendous pace. The humor is good, if predictable, and the musical numbers have more authenticity than any of the balletic indulgences of the new-style musicals. It is a lively evening's entertainment.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THOMAS BARBOUR

Little Magazines in Paris

I AM WAITING FOR A FRIEND to send me a copy of *New Story* from Paris as soon as it comes out. It is rumored that this is to be sponsored to some degree by *Story* in America and that the editors have been working, with more than usual care for a Paris magazine, to accumulate a table of contents representing the best of writing in English abroad. It was also rumored that it would appear in the fall of 1950, then again in January; but I have not yet seen it and wonder if it has succumbed to the same fate that overtook something called *Phase*. Of this, the remark of one who could not resist mentioning something about a "passing phase" proved all too true, for the proposed magazine miscarried shortly after the brave, and somewhat absurd, announcement of its editor-to-be that he would sift the best of American writing in Paris from the scribblings of the café "pernod-graphers." Meanwhile there is—or was—*Zero, Points, Id,* and *Janus,* samples of which are now before me.

The occasion of there being again after another war a great many Americans in Paris, presumably students and artists, inevitably invites comparison with an earlier period of expatriate activity; but beyond the superficial similarities of circumstance the visitor will find little here to remind him of the storied 'twenties. If that was, this surely is not any Golden Age of American writing on the continent; what is more disturbing is the fact that those who live and, occasionally, work here have not permitted themselves the healthy delusion that it is. Instead of bumptious enthusiasm, however sophomoric, there is only bitter, and equally sophomoric, cynicism; so that if you have tapped out ten lines on your typewriter, you will find yourself being introduced as something of an oddity: a writer who has actually written. To get an idea of this rather dismal picture, it may not be entirely fair to apply to the little magazines. Writing that was once experimental is no longer so new and daring that established presses will be expected to shy clear of it, and authors who have something meritorious to offer will more likely send it home for publication, with the expectation of a larger public and some reimbursement. Yet, remembering the role of the little magazine in the past, you might reasonably turn to the current crop to check upon work in progress and search for promises that may later be fulfilled.

The four publications that I have mentioned have much in common, for one thing a very brief life span. *Points* has far outstripped the others by surviving eight issues, while the ninth is already at the press. The others, after no more than three or four appearances, seem to have given up the ghost. All are rather sloppily put together. There is a very legitimate excuse, in view of their modest capitalization, for the poor quality of the paper; but the gross inadequacy of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the proofreading in every instance seems far less excusable. Careless copy may put an additional barrier of mistrust between the reader and certain poems, not too intelligible under the best of conditions, as, for example, in something by Martin J. Cohn:

his shaking hands the class endure.

Should you, or should you not, read "clasp" for "class"? Furthermore, I sense in this mechanical delinquency something of a sign of the overall lackaday spirit that pervades the whole editorial venture.

In a typical issue of one of these magazines you may almost certainly expect to find most of the following: a cryptic biographical note on a young contributor, indicating that he lives rather dangerously ("His hobby is revolution . . ."); a prestige contribution—a tough-talk poem, a folksy mood piece by William Carlos Williams ("Gesses, is there in Passaic a drawer-full of such intended benefices?"); an angry and highly impressionistic critical article damning some author or other and always prefaced by a candid admission of the reviewer's limited knowledge of his subject; and, finally, a preoccupation with homosexuality, which, in point of fact, has inspired two of the best stories and the most maturely phrased essay of the lot. But nowhere will you find the refreshing energy that others' nostalgia suggests once informed, say, a *Transition,* though there is still *Transition* and the name of Eugène Jolas remains in the listing of the advisory board. It scarcely comes within the scope of these remarks, for, though in English, it is devoted to translations of French writers. While once it may have been a bridge, a transition, to the future, its links are now with the past; Pierre Reverdy's poems of 1946-1949 are set beside those of 1916-1918, and the ghost of Apollinaire is raised by Madame Picabia, reminding you that the eccentricities in these younger journals are no longer novel, but only pale reflections of another day. (A poem by Bosley Brotman, called "Boredom, Cafés, and Icepicks, 1949" begins:

Sometimes
there seems to be
little other than imitation left . . .)

Of the present, or recent, Paris magazines, *Id* (edited by John T. Dwyer and Ross-Smith) exhibits the most distinctive, and also perhaps the most objectionable, character. Though it advertises that "all points of view are considered," it reads, as you might anticipate from the title, like a house organ for a group of asylum attendants. "Visitation," a story, allegedly from the Russian of Vladimir Ruboschov, is a curious example of the *reductio ad absurdum* of Freudian writing, where the terms of dramatic presentation are crowded out by the lingo of psychoanalysis: "Thus he was self-contradictory, which gave his life meaning and purpose, and harmonized him into a semi-tonal-modal blend with the non-ego." This sort of business goes on too in Jacc-Doyle Haamer's panting study of Mauriac's *Génitrix;* it threatens in an essay on Rimbaud and Hart

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Crane by James R. Hewitt, but his analysis, though it contributes little of moment to our knowledge of these poets, is redeemed by his happy inclination to look more closely at the work of his subjects than at his psychology textbook. *Id,* as far as I am able to discover, lasted but a single issue.

The perpetrators of *Zero* (edited, first from Paris, later from Tangier, by Albert Benveniste and Thermistocles Hoetis) apparently decided at the start of their editorial careers that they would be content to put out but four issues; they achieved their goal only by the subterfuge of printing their third and fourth numbers as one "double" issue. It is rather a shame, if true, that from the beginning they were considering their end, for the whole operation has the haphazard air of "let's-get-it-over-with-quickly." As a result the final issue particularly offends with bad proof-reading. What might have been an interesting minor addition to the body of Lorca's work done into English, his lecture on Spanish cradle songs, is marred by careless translation and a spate of typographical errors; moreover the point is lost which a painstaking editor might have redeemed by providing some sort of illustrative notation, however crude, of the songs' melody lines. I say this is a shame because the editors seem to have useful contacts and have been able to get hold of the work of young writers already beginning to attract some attention. Paul Bowles's "The Delicate Prey," the title piece of his recent collection of stories, appears in the second number of *Zero.* It is simply and unaffectedly written, but it is not fiction. Lacking any consistent point of view, or penetration of character, or conflict or tension in any dramatic sense, it remains a bit of exotic reporting and, for those who want it, a vehicle for the vicarious enjoyment of sadistic perversion. In the same issue is a fragment of a study by James Baldwin, part of which has also appeared in *Partisan Review.* That this discussion of the "protest novel" is fragmentary is disappointing, but the section has the virtue of recommending the whole. Mr. Baldwin goes about his business with a seriousness unusual for the company he keeps on these pages; at the least he aspires to maturity and is not reluctant to exercise his intelligence, qualities which are reflected in his readable disposition of the language, without pedantry or pretentiousness. Because so much of *Zero's* space is devoted to it, I must mention a long poem called "Math Glass" by Lionel Ziprin, who has provided copy for two issues. This is offered as his first published poem, but for the moment it seems destined only for partial publication; Mr. Ziprin's marathon, I am told, continues, but *Zero's* race is run. I am afraid "Math Glass" is a very tedious affair. To say I do not find it for the most part understandable may be but a confession of my own slow-wittedness; it is perhaps more telling criticism to say that the poem does not invite understanding. Private references cloud the issue, suggesting the hostile rudeness of two friends whispering at a party. Moreover, Mr. Ziprin writes under the misapprehension that poetry consists in archaisms, inversions, and cavalier disregard for the niceties of grammar, thus:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"It's not for nought,"
He minded me,
"That in astrology
Three lives can live as one . . .
The pig, the reindeer and the and the mole,
And try how may, still burst."

I do not know if those last two lines are Mr. Ziprin's or the typesetter's; I can quote them only as they are given to me.

Poetry is the principal concern of *Janus* (edited by Elliott Stein and Daniel Mauroc), a bilingual publication, favoring its French contributors and devoting a good deal of space to the work of its own editors. In the issue I have seen (the second) there are but nine poems in English by five poets, in addition to a story by Elliott Stein which attests the editors' inclination toward surrealism. Russel Edson out-Ziprins Ziprin; though the invitation to understand his verse is slightly more compelling, the hope of achieving its seems a remoter possibility. The work of Mr. Stein, Norman A. Schenlov, and Bosley Brotman suggests they have some of the ingredients of poetry, but they are unwilling, here at least, to make the best use of them. Messrs. Stein and Schenlov brew a broth generally too thick; Mr. Brotman's is too thin. Dr. Williams has obliged with sixty-two words out of the corner of his mouth, arranged in stanza form. There is also a translation into French of Kafka's only work for the theater, a very short, hitherto unpublished playlet.

Points (edited by Marcel Bisiaux and Sindbad Vail) is also bilingual. It is probably the most conservative publication of the group. I rather suspect the editors of some timidity in their approach to their material and of particular reticence in the face of poetry, though there is something refreshing in the fact that their naiveté is not paraded in the disguise of pretension. In their eighth issue there are but three poems in English, two prestige contributions from David Gascoyne and a slight effort, already alluded to, by Martin J. Cohn. I fear the title *Points* derives from the editors' desire that the stories they print have some point to them; this may be an old-fashioned criterion if it is taken too ingenuously, yet it works to the magazine's advantage. There are two fine little stories here, neither, alas, by Americans. *Les Gondoles* is by Annic Kerr, a Breton; Irish Brendan Behan contributes *After the Wake*. (Is it merely coincidence that these two writers, both so attuned to the rhythm and sonority of their respective languages, are Celts?) Mr. Behan handles a delicate subject with sensitivity and taste, permitting but a negligible excess towards the end; he has the rare gift of knowing when to restrain his narrative and when to let it go forward, so that his tensions are always controlled and his irony never heavy-handed; but above all, he has inherited the virtue of his race of writing as he talks and talking as he sings. The critical articles and reviews here would be well for-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

gotten; they are generally irresponsible and betray in every line the poverty of the reviewers' backgrounds. D. Jon Grossman's critique of Waugh's novels is particularly smart-aleck and foolish; he concludes that "our generation may very likely see the end of literature as an art, for several centuries at least," and though you may not be inspired with confidence in his authority to judge the fate of literature, his remark is disturbing enough if it reflects the attitude of his generation. An editorial notice of a story contest that fizzled supplies corroboration of Mr. Grossman's despair: two hundred stories contributed last year, less than twenty this. Small wonder the life of the little magazine is so precarious!

If these samplings permit a generalization, I should say they indicate two related failures of respect. In the first place, most of the writers here show very little regard for their own language, for the possibilities of words and the ordering of words, either in a sensuous arrangement (like Mr. Behan's) or a syntactical one (like Mr. Baldwin's). Secondly, coupled with this lack of respect for possibilities, is a failure of appreciation for past achievements. This is especially noticeable among the critics; too much reading bores them to suggest that it is the books that are at fault, not they. A blind respectfulness may hinder progress, and too much sobriety is never to be commended; but to read without joy and to write without feeling that such joy is worth the trouble required to recreate it, these failures can only add substance to Mr. Grossman's gloomy prognostications.

Without wishing to disparage those who have come to France with the best will and serious intentions, I cannot help but suggest that the G.I. Bill of Rights is an unwitting accomplice in an unfortunate situation. There are too many young men in Paris taking advantage of the opportunity to have a good time for themselves before they settle down to the more tedious aspects of living, too many accepting an education simply because it is free and means a trip abroad. They take the general course at the Sorbonne because they do not really know what they came to study, and they sit in on an occasional lecture in a language they scarcely understand. Their high-school training is probably no better than that of most Americans; education remains a mystery they are sadly ill-equipped to penetrate, and literature is a closed door which, unhappily, cannot be opened save by the tiresome process of reading. Yet Paris caters to the writer as no other city on earth, offering delicious possibilities of the Bohemian life, practically putting the paper before you and the pen in your hand. The mood is infectious, and the G.I. students have not escaped. Somehow they feel that writing is the thing to do. Perhaps it is, but they have no idea in the world how to do it.

I am still waiting to read *New Story*. Its editors have a mighty gap to fill, and I could wish them no more grave responsibility.

Haut de Cagnes, February 1951

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

POSTCRIPT

New-Story has appeared (edited by Jean-Francois Bergery, David Burnett, Eric Protter, and Sylvia Leonard); in fact two issues of it have appeared in rather overwhelming succession. It is better bound than its local competitors; the paper and printing are quite fine, and the proof-reading, though still considerably short of perfection, shows some greater care. The magazine is devoted exclusively to short stories in English. In a sense it is not a representative Paris magazine; for, though printed and edited in France, it is published through a New York address, and the bulk of its distribution is in America. I am told also that over seventy-five percent of the manuscripts submitted are sent from the States, although a greater percentage of those accepted are from here. The undeclared policy of the editors seems generally conservative; except for a single story by David Marcus (in the March issue), which recalls the surrealist pieces of Dylan Thomas, there is no eccentricity here and no arty foolishness to ape the gestures of "new writing." The result, alas (perhaps one cannot have it both ways), is a general level of dull competence. On the bottom layer is a group of stories (mostly weeded out in the improved second issue) that suggest a talent adequate to a good prep-school magazine. Perhaps I should not be surprised, but I am, to number among these a story by Ray Bradbury which is announced as part of a book presumably by now published by a reputable American firm. His *The Other Foot* shows the dewy-eyed social consciousness that is generally applauded when it appears in thoughtful adolescents, but is usually expected to find maturer expression, if it has not disappeared, by the author's thirtieth year. At the other extreme are Jeanne Rogers's sensitive study of childhood, *Melancholy Bait* (March issue) and *The Outing* (April) by the same James Baldwin cheerfully mentioned before. In his earlier article, Mr. Baldwin repeats the too-often-forgotten truth that "a novel insistently demands the presence and passion of human beings, who cannot ever be labeled." It is good to see him here practicing his own preachments, and one is encouraged to expect the best from his novel promised soon.

Points has brought forth a new issue (its ninth), which does not materially alter previous judgment. The contributions in English have dwindled: there is no poetry, there are two articles (both a marked improvement upon the contributions to the eighth issue), and there are but three stories. Of these, two are easily forgettable, but *Feeney* by Patrick Greer, an Irishman, suggests, after their earlier success with Mr. Behan, that the editors would do well to cultivate their fortunate Hibernian contacts.

Janus, after long silence, threatens to speak again. Apparently its editors have joined forces with the staff of the defunct *Id*. The combination should set their magazine at the furthest remove from *New-Story* imaginable.

Paris, April 1951

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Reviews

SIDNEY MONAS

The Fire-Bird's Tail Feathers[1]

TRAVELLERS' TALES FROM RUSSIA, read in an atmosphere of strain by an anxiety-ridden public, convey a wonder at best unreal, at worst monstrous and wholly frightening. It was sport in scholarly circles not long after the war (our alliance with the "heroic people of, etc." had just worn through) to read aloud from the book of a certain Marquis de Custine and to follow up with, "Now, when do you think that was written?" "Last week," would have been considered a proper answer: "Tomorrow," a better one. Custine's two-volume *La Russie en 1839* appeared, actually, in the 1840's; a bad book when it was written, today (a translation, *Journey for Our Time,* has just been published in abridged form) more illustrative of the constant distortion recorded by the stiffened traveller than of the lessons to be learned from history. Tsarist and Bolshevik, the fire-bird[2] has and has not changed.

Past the midway point of the nineteenth century, the Russian novel became a new and cheaper mode of travel in this country where the bird lived his peculiar home-life. One has only to read the first English reviews of Turgenev's novels to grasp that both reviewers and public are another kind of prejudiced traveller, eager to solve easy mysteries, but unwilling to be much surprised.

There is a Russian proverb: a samovar has many uses; one can drive nails with it. Thus, literature is being used in Russian studies to stockade a last refuge for the easy generalization.

The People of Great Russia, by Geoffrey Gorer and John Rickman, a study in "national character" based on Dr. Rickman's medical experiences with the Friends' War Victims Relief Unit between 1916 and 1918, on interviews with displaced persons, and to a great extent on analyses of literary texts, particularly Dostoyevsky, finds the "chief clue" to Russian behavior, national and international, in the widespread practice of swaddling infants during the first nine months of their lives, combined with periodic release from this constraint for

---

[1]JOURNEY FOR OUR TIME (The Journals of the Marquis de Custine), translated by *Phyllis Penn Kohler.* Pellegrini & Cudahy. $4.00. THE PEOPLE OF GREAT RUSSIA, by *Geoffrey Gorer & John Rickman.* Chanticleer. $3.00. PUBLIC OPINION IN SOVIET RUSSIA: A Study in Mass Persuasion, by *Alex Inkeles.* Harvard. $5.00. SELECTED WRITINGS, by *Boris Pasternak.* New Directions. $1.50. A HISTORY OF RUSSIAN LITERATURE, by *D. S. Mirsky;* edited and abridged by *F. J. Whitfield.* Knopf. $3.00. THE EPIC OF RUSSIAN LITERATURE, by *Marc Slonim.* Oxford. $5.00. RUSSIAN FOLKLORE, by *Y. M. Sokolov.* Macmillan. $10.00.

[2]Zhar-ptitsa, the fire-bird, a sun-fertility symbol, was the object of heroic quest by ancient bogatyrs. Only the pure youngest son found him.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

feeding purposes. Not that the "swaddling hypothesis" accounts for everything. All Mr. Gorer claims for it is,

> the isolation and description of the main motives of the majority of the population over and above those rational ones which are gratified by the operation of the institutions which historical accident and technological development have produced at a given time.

This way: confinement provokes a destructive rage in the infant, which it directs against the constraint rather than the constrainer (who is hard to spot in the extreme lack-privacy of peasant family life); the raging infant fears retaliation; fear-guilt finds outlet in a "free-floating unfocussed hostility" and in attempts at maximum sensual gratification during the periods of release from constraint. From this you get the Russian propensity to conspiracies, confessions, orgies, and quests for absolute truth; the behavior of Russian diplomats, and even Leninism. Mr. Gorer demonstrates his hypothesis by analogy. If, in Russian cultural behavior, a pattern of "free-floating unfocussed hostility" can be noted, look for the swaddling. Behavior observed or discussed in interviews with displaced persons is checked by reference to "the major novels of Dostoyevsky" (as though he were a folk-bard of the Nile-Congo divide! Dostoyevsky,[3] who concerned himself—in his major novels, almost exclusively —with people in extremity, in the state of obsession, is called on to testify for "typical" Russian behavior!); a foreign policy to deal with swaddled Russia is courageously recommended (curiously, one of firm and consistent containment, very like that of the U.S. Department of State and British Foreign Office); and the question, "Do *specific* childhood experiences have a uniform and predictable influence?" is not yet even raised.

A man who makes life pretty chancy for the easy generalization, on the other hand, is Mr. Alex Inkeles. Cautiously informative, carefully documented, *Public Opinion in Soviet Russia* uses Soviet sources to reconstruct the organization and functioning of mass communication media in the Soviet Union, relating these media to the society in which they operate, and the ideology by which they came into being. Organization, control, mobilization, these are the key words. Mass communication assails the Soviet citizen at every stage of his day's occupation, not with news, or entertainment, or solicitation, but with exhortation: produce, how to produce, what to produce, why to produce, produce. The oral agitator harangues him at his place of work and in his home. Newspaper, cinema, radio—"production of commodities" shrills from all. The pressure to produce is not dissimilar to the pressure in the U.S. to consume, exhortation takes the place of advertising, though with a far more formidable force behind it.

That force is the Communist Party, which sets all standards, including those of language. Language, spoken or written, must be understood by everybody,

---

[3]By way of irrelevance: Dostoyevsky, the son of a doctor, was never swaddled; Tolstov was.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and it must "drive" production in the interests of the Party: these are the two criteria. With every incentive to avoid innovation, publicists use their respective media not only for the accepted purpose, but in the accepted way. Flatness and monotony pervade. Language becomes utterly predictable. The Party itself staffs newspapers with editors, radio-stations with directors; it removes deviationists (the casualty rate among editors is enormous), and supplies material. Censorship, in the old-fashioned sense, falls out of use.

The system contains elements of dysfunction. The technological novelty of communication media, that still wraps stale phrases in a uniform of wonder for a part of the population, is bound to wear off. Significant elements of the population, in the so-called "deaf corners," are scarcely reached at all, for all the haranguing. The amateur agitator who must live among the people he agitates submits on occasion to pressures from below as well as those from above. The middle-level in all areas of life *is* thus pressurized. Human relations frequently assert themselves over the merely political.

I do not know how much encouragement should be drawn from it, but the Party's least controllable communication medium has proved to be the film. Mr. Inkeles attributes this to the basic fact that the film is an interpretative medium. One can find other (if related) reasons: the Party's sometimes rather touching awe for Culture; lack of a clear program—"socialist realism," "reality in the process of becoming the ideal"—imprecise concepts of what the film should do; but most striking, the determination of a small group of artists to retain a modicum of honesty in their art.

Throughout his book, Mr. Inkeles has chosen to deal with a sociological mechanism — a complex, closely related, historically shifting machine — and humanity has appeared only as grist. The exclusion of psychology and of the individual human being, the exclusion of any notion of art or morality, has been deliberate and methodical, and it would be unfair to berate Mr. Inkeles for not doing what he chose not to do. On the descriptive level, he makes available in convenient form an enormous amount of information not available elsewhere in English, with a disinterestedness that is, on the whole, admirable. He demonstrates that with sociological method (and supplementary checking among a broad group of displaced persons) Soviet sources may be latticed into a fairly approximate framework of truth. But truth on a text-book level. Nothing profounder is attempted.

Truth on a text-book level has its own temptations; in remaining absolutely faithful to his sources, the scholar becomes their prisoner. Mr. Inkeles, overly impressed by the amount of "cultural material" in the press, "serious music" on the air, disregards the Soviet corruption of thought and language, which is general, and has cankered "cultural material" to a dry staleness. His own style, I might add, is machine-tooled and verbose, not without a hint of the sources he has used. The book nevertheless has real merits.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

If real encouragement is wanted, one must fight through the vast perversion of arts and letters, where among phrase-hackers and logic-mongers, the fourth-rate journalists and professional Party-men who dominate the Soviet arts, the incongruous figure of Boris Pasternak appears. Criticized time and again for lacking "a socialized perception of reality," more than once reported purged, he seems to be still very much alive, translating, reading, working: incredibly. Of course, he is a show-piece. His father, Leonid Pasternak, the artist, was a friend and collaborator of Tolstoy; his mother, a famous pianist. He himself studied under Scriabin, was a favorite pupil of Cohen's at Marburg, knew Rilke intimately. There is too much Culture wrapped up in all this for some Soviet leaders not to stand a bit in awe. Pasternak has always (at least publicly) approved of the regime. Not many people read him. And so he is allowed to publish; on occasion, he is even praised. It may or may not be significant that he has published no original verse since 1945. Reportedly, he has been translating Shakespeare; and translation in Russian literature has traditionally a more honored function than in ours. At any rate, he seems to endure.

Stefan Schimanski, in 1945-46, edited a volume of Pasternak's prose and one of his poetry (unevenly translated by J. M. Cohen), published in England. In 1949, New Directions slapped together what seem to be reprints from the English prose volume, and some oddly assorted (and overlapping) verse translations by Babette Deutsch and C. M. Bowra from its "Selected Writings" series. The book sells cheaply, and that's about all that can be said for it; neither time nor editorial judgment have been expended.

The prose itself is rich and difficult. "Safe Conduct," a spiritual autobiography, clusters thick with imagery. The main narrative thread winds Pasternak to his career as poet, via music and philosophy. The characters: his father, mother, Scriabin, Rilke, Cohen, Mayakovsky, Biely, but also Marburg and Milan, Moscow, the Revolution, Art. Objects are frequently represented by the emotion they displace in the observer. Similes, metaphors: the Milan cathedral Pasternak had been observing "slid into me with the whole choral murmur of its pillars and turrets, like a plug of snow down the jointed column of a drainpipe." Pasternak's imagery is not free association; it is packed with meaning and power. His work owes something to a number of symbolist and expressionist writers of the turn-of-the-century, perhaps to Barlach, but also to Proust. Yet he is a highly original writer and his work must be understood in itself. "The Childhood of Luvers," a long short-story about a girl's growing-up (included in the New Directions volume as two stories), is his masterpiece. As in the autobiography, objects, forces and landscapes, as well as people, are characters in the story. The girl, smitten by the death of a stranger she feels she has somehow known, achieves womanhood by an identification with the universal, with everything that is outside her. A carefully developed series of images, in which the child conceives the world, from the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

bear-rug in her room to the lame stranger who is run down by her mother's horses, the "she" and the "not-she," articulate a delicate and powerful experience.

Pasternak's fame, however, does not depend on his prose. Unfortunately, in the United States it cannot depend on anything at all, since the verse translations are miserably inadequate. (J. M. Cohen has translated a number of poems moderately well, but the volume is not available here.) Pasternak depends for effect largely on progression of images, simplicity of diction, and freshness of meter and rhyme. Unless a first-rate poet tackles the job, meter and rhyme will be lost in any case. Any competent translator, however, ought to be able to retain the other two qualities; but this is not the case in the New Directions volume.

The literary history is not a rewarding genre. The catalogue and the spot-check hem it about discouragingly close. Some cooperative ventures have turned out moderately well, and now and then a sense of necessity or obligation will prod a man of broad tastes and fine discriminations to make the attempt alone. Prince D. S. Mirsky took his obligations to Russian literature seriously (he first introduced Pasternak to English audiences, and the critics Rozanov and Shestov, and a host of other outstanding Russian writers) and before his tragic conversion to Marxism, return to the USSR, and final disappearance at the end of the '30's, wrote two broad surveys of Russian literature, which have since been judiciously abridged and combined in a single volume, *A History of Russian Literature*. He wrote in a language to which he was not native and for an audience as stiff with preconceptions as can readily be imagined. He was a man of very wide reading, in his own language and others, and he wanted to do his best by the fire-bird. Today, his book is still outstanding, an indispensable text and reference for anyone at all interested in the subject, yet a number of essential defects should be pointed out.

Prince Mirsky rejected unity of narrative in favor of comprehensiveness. His approach is eclectic, combining biography, history, criticism, with a more or less open mind. Open, one might say, to purely personal enthusiasms and distastes as well as to real insights. The book is difficult to read as a whole, falling off into inlets, outbursts and digressions. With a narrowly limited critical vocabulary, a poor sense of English style, and an immense subject, Mirsky unintentionally repeats himself. One gets bored with reading that this or that work is unsurpassed of its kind. One is puzzled by statements such as this one, about Pushkin's stories: "They are pure, unadulterated narrative, anecdotes raised to the rank of serious art by the seriousness of the artistic process." Or this: ". . . the real Dostoyevsky is food that is easily assimilated only by a profoundly diseased spiritual organism." When writing about poetry, Mirsky suffers under a special handicap, that of having no decent English translation available to quote from. Occasionally, he improvises a prose translation or paraphrase.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But statements—and they are frequent—like this one about Yazykov: "His poetry is cold and seething like champagne or like a mineral spring. There is no human significance in it"—are not very meaningful without illustration; in themselves, rather banal.

Giants of Russian poetry and prose, very imperfectly known to English readers—Pushkin and Gogol above all, but Leskov, Tiutchev, Lermontov, Biely as well—are given their due in English for the first time. Mirsky's praise is lavish, if monotonous. Gogol's work, unfortunately, the most enigmatic and controversial of Russian nineteenth century prose, remains imperfectly illuminated. That psychopathic horror story, *The Terrible Vengeance*, and the phoney epic, *Taras Bulba*, are singled out for high praise, while his excellent comedies, *Gamblers*, and *The Wedding* are dismissed with a shrug.

The taste of a literary historian cannot fairly be expected to embrace the whole of a national literature with equal zeal. Yet Mirsky's taste seems to me essentially divided and leads him into contradictions and downright lapses of judgment. He attacks the critic Belinsky for his journalese prose and an influence that drove Russian literature down the propaganda path and all but killed it in the 1860's (an influence that is, of course, once again supreme), yet he himself attacks bitterly Turgenev's *Virgin Soil* because it "slandered an heroic movement" and because it proves that Turgenev was "out of touch with reality." His distaste for Chekhov may be explained in terms of English idolatry for that author, but how account for his wild overestimation of Andreyev and Gorky, especially the latter? Except in terms of social and political sympathies I cannot conceive how Gorky can be rated higher than Chekhov. But if social and political sympathies are the criterion, how account for Mirsky's admiration for Sologub, a completely apolitical, and even amoral writer? It seems to me that Mirsky believed passionately in the expressionist fallacy of the supremacy and absolute autonomy of art and at the same time and with equal vehemence in the Marxist, or perhaps, more accurately, a Marxist-utilitarian view of the function of literature, and this contradiction of soul not only provoked discrepancies in his work, but at least in part his tragic decision to return to Russia, and his disappearance there, apparently after unwillingness to toe the party-line.

Marc Slonim states in the Foreword to his *The Epic of Russian Literature:*

> It is the author's firm conviction that the study of Russian literature can contribute more to a dispassionate and real understanding of the vast Russian continent than all the statistical data, political guesses, and travellers' tales . . . His book attempts to present a definite portrayal of the Russian mentality . . .

The present volume, in which a national literature unfolds to startle the world with Tolstoy's genius, will be supplemented by another not yet published dealing with Russian literature from Tolstoy to the present. Slonim considers

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Tolstoy (rather than Pushkin) the high point of "classical" Russian literature, and makes him grand-daddy to the Soviet school. Interesting, even exciting reading as a whole, the book is nevertheless riddled with shortcomings.

The first and most serious is a lack of comparative standards. Mr. Slonim makes no attempts to relate either Russian history or Russian literature to what is going on outside of Russia. Realism, didacticism, utilitarianism, may have deep roots in Russian literary history, but they were not unknown elsewhere in the nineteenth century, and an international influence was certainly more likely at that time than a national one. Furthermore, the religious didacticism of early Russian literature, and the moralising of the folk tradition seem rather different from the special "jusqueboutiste" dogmatic didacticism of the nihilist critics. Perhaps this is simply national character asserting itself regardless of influence. But Pushkin and Dostoyevsky, and to a certain extent Gogol, are excluded from the Volksgeist if this is so. These are, incidentally, the authors who writhe most uncomfortably in Mr. Slonim's pages.

The mode of presentation seems to me happier than Mirsky's; chapters on critical, philosophical, political movements alternate with chapters on individual artists. Biography is kept down to a minimum. Key stories, poems, novels, are paraphrased for flavor and illustration. Minor errors of historical fact and circumstance occur, but no single author can be expected to master the scholarly minutiae of so vast a field. There are, unfortunately, more serious lapses. Frequently, in paraphrasing poems, stories, novels, Mr. Slonim seems completely to miss the point. His blindness is most strikingly illustrated in the Pushkin and Gogol chapters. In his resumé of *Eugene Onegin*, Slonim recounts the last meeting of Eugene with Tatiana, and her rejection of his rather indecent proposal. Afterward, says Slonim, "Onegin, defeated and disappointed, resumes his fruitless wanderings." Where does this come from? The whole force of the last canto of *Onegin* builds up to the fact that the hero resumes nothing, that the poet leaves him abruptly standing where he is, with the full burden of his self-awareness. Also, I have looked hard, but I cannot find the "issue of civic integrity," which Mr. Slonim refers to as the theme of the poem. Furthermore, Pushkin's point was not so much "the impact of European patterns" on Russian life as the impact of *literary* patterns: each of the main characters has been seduced by a literary mode—Onegin by Byronism, Lensky by German idealism, and Tatiana by French romantic novels—but only Tatiana morally survives her literary prejudices.

With Gogol, the matter stands even worse. *Nevsky Prospect* is certainly not one of Gogol's best stories, but it is an interesting parable of idea and reality. The point is not so much the contrast between Pirogov's trivial fling and the mortal passion of Piskarev, although certainly they are contrasted, but the fact that the same deception has been worked on them both, the vulgar skirt-chaser and the dreamer, by the weird lights of Petersburg. The misinterpretation

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of *Notes of a Madman,* one of Gogol's most terrifyingly effective and original pieces, is equally blatant, and *The Inspector-General* also suffers.

Slonim's treatment of Dostoyevsky, who scarcely fits at all into his scheme of national development, except as an aberration, begs every biographical and literary question that writer raises by pleading "psychopathology"; one senses almost a deliberate unfairness. (Furthermore, *The Possessed* is *not* a "romantic drama of passions," whatever else it may be!) Dostoyevsky's fate at the hands of Soviet criticism is gone into at the end of the chapter, and it seems to me that Mr. Slonim places too high a value on the "classicization" of this most un-socialized of all novelists in the Soviet schools.

By the time one gets to the chapter dealing with them, one is hardly surprised that Mr. Slonim feels most at home with the nihilist critics, with Chernyshevsky, Dobrolyubov, and Pisarev—as with the Tolstoy of *What is Art?* He sees in these, and quite rightly, precedents of later Bolshevik criticism. He quotes, and seems to approve Dobrolyubov's statement: "Real criticism deals with works of art in the same manner as with the facts of life." He defines (brilliantly) Pisarev's journalism as "intellectual terrorism," he describes the nihilist movement and its relations to the literary trends of the 1860's (and later) with much sympathy and understanding. (Chernyshevsky wrote: "Literature in Russia constitutes almost the sum-total of its intellectual life.")

The Epic of Russian Literature (to 1881) ends with a discussion of Tolstoy's influence in the Soviet Union. Writers are instructed to write like Tolstoy, as Mr. Slonim says, and a considerable number have tried. The Symbolist Movement, so rich in Russia, will be discussed, we presume in the forthcoming sequel to this book, along with post-symbolist and Soviet developments. A "definite portrayal of the Russian mentality" ought certainly to emerge; one wonders if perhaps not too definite.

The Russian translation project of the American Council of Learned Societies set out not long ago to make available in English key Russian and Soviet sources in the humanities and social sciences. Results have been disappointing. *Russian Folklore,* by the late Soviet folklorist Y. M. Sokolov, is no exception. An enormously rich and little-known field, Russian folklore, if competently translated, annotated and historically related, ought surely to find a wide audience in the U.S. But nothing could be more calculated to frighten off the intelligent reader than the present volume.

Prohibitive cost, bad translation, and a padded text surround the few samples of genuine folk-art included in this thick-skinned book. The writing, unabetted by skilled translation, is abominable. A dubious history of folkloristics drones out for introduction a few casual references to Frazer, spits at Freud, and neglects Jung completely, while Stalin and Marx receive due praise (pioneers!) for 150 pages. The folklore of old Russia, broken down by genre, is then

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

discussed (not without interest, in spite of the folk poems to Stalin and Lenin quoted at merciless length) before some concluding remarks.

Sokolov maintains that the Russian character, as it expresses itself in folklore, is practical and shrewd, not fantasy-ridden nor dream-soaked as slavophile myth would have it. To prove his point, he catalogues traces of Russian everyday life, satiric peasant lore on the life of priests and nobility, and themes of practical skills, particularly in the riddles, proverbs and prose tales. He admits the prevalence of religious and erotic themes as well, but relates these to historical circumstances and notes that under Soviet conditions they are rapidly disappearing. Class, national and regional origins of special themes are discussed, occasionally with what appears to be genuine insight and real learning. The debt of various Russian poets (Pushkin among others) to folk art is referred to and exemplified, in the narrow sense, in terms of theme or employment of device; Sokolov also traces, and rather more satisfactorily, the reverse passage of written poetry into folk art. Folk materials in the USSR, as Sokolov makes clear, grow sparser and their quality deteriorates quite perceptibly ("bylini," epic poems of medieval origin, grow thinner in number and length, generation by generation). Nevertheless, compared with more mechanized countries, the Soviet Union still contains a rich store of traditional oral poetry and song.

The regime honors folk-poets who honor the regime: the result—folk odes to Stalin *ad nauseam*. Sokolov urges further mobilization of folklore for socialist production. Machine-made speech and writing rapidly displace poems.

The overall tone of self-asserted moral superiority in this book, dreary, liturgical, and unconvincing, bores one—by the time 500 pages have been plodded through—almost to bitterness.

In the American academy, the study of Russian has become strikingly widespread—the most studied foreign language, with the possible exception of French. Every time a publisher belches, a new book on Russia appears. Thus, our concern provides an industry. We are obsessed by immediate issues, deafened by a clamor of cultural self-congratulation. Pushkin is blocked from us as much by our presumptions (lyrical and otherwise) as by bad translation. Herzen, who lived through so much of the nineteenth century (which produced both the USSR and the present-day U.S.) and could tell us of extremity, is less familiar to us than Custine. Even Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky are only half-known. Crude constructions, backed frequently by massive learning and brief insights, are staked out shakily on the soil of literature. For all the books, for all the sprouting linguists in our colleges, we know Russia less well than any other country where we have never been.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

R. W. FLINT

Pound and the Lyric

AN EXAMINATION OF EZRA POUND, edited by *Peter Russell*. New Directions. $3.75.

WHEREVER AND HOWEVER ONE ENTERS POUND'S WRITING in either verse or prose, one is brought back, it seems to me, to the main fact, the most interesting and decisive fact about Pound, namely, his genius as a lyrist. Criticism has by now pretty well achieved the true balance of emphasis in its study of Yeats's huge field of interest, and done so largely by following his own hints and clues. The same service should now be performed for Pound, with the relatively fewer and less emphatic clues which his essays and letters provide us. It is by now axiomatic, I think, that the more one knows of Yeats's secondary writings the better one understands and enjoys the lyrics. For all its richness and interest, we discover when we study *A Vision* that the only ground where Yeats is concerned with sanity and coherence in the largest sense, the only position he does not himself undermine with facetious self-parody is his lyric verse. Common sense, finally, prompts the conclusion that this is the result not only of "genius," in the usual romantic meaning of the term, but of the most strenuous self-appraisal. I would contend that the same is exactly true of Pound. What I would plead for here would be a hierarchy of seriousness, the "lower" levels, as they pass from mastery to various degrees of conjecture and amateurism, being more freely mixed with caricature and parody. Though Yeats the White Magician may not be the figure we most often dwell upon, his white magic was nevertheless a serious matter. There were black magicians; one could choose sides and accumulate disciples. In the passage from Axël to Robartes, Yeats's decision for white magic was an important one. I propose, therefore, to examine Pound's stable of hobby-horses with no more, but also with no less, interest and seriousness.

There seem to be three main energies operating in Pound's work: *firstly*, the lyric genius; *secondly*, a passionate ambition for *maestria*, for a position of authority which would group the rest of the literary world about him "in the pleasing attitudes of discipleship"; and *lastly*, that spectacular and much-lamented moral fanaticism, which can degenerate from what Mark Van Doren calls "study in the interest of perfection" to an ugliness and superstition impossible to extenuate, but which also traverses a middle ground of very stimulating speculation. I shall try to work backward, in this review, from this amorphous territory to the dominating idea of the lyric. The book under consideration is a collection of essays assembled by Peter Russell, one of Pound's English publishers. Like other well-known anthologies of this sort, it suffers

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

from a parochial bias. One misses certain landmarks of Pound criticism (Dudley Fitts's review of the *Cantos* in *Hound and Horn,* for example) and one finds a certain amount of fruitless critical cud-chewing. But Russell has concentrated on the main line of interest rather than on the important but diffuse issues stirred up by the Bollingen Award: and if you take this book along with the Letters and Hugh Kenner's brilliant exegetical essay, "The Rose in the Steel Dust,"[1] you have the material basis, at last, for something like a final account of what Pound has been up to.

Professionalism in the arts, Jeffersonian, not to say Confucian, politics, a sort of Confucian naturalism in philosophy and morals, the economic idealism of the medieval Church; these points roughly define Pound's program. He might be said to join the ideal medievalism of Henry Adams to the political radicalism of Thoreau, by way of Confucius, Dante, Jefferson, Ruskin, Morris, Douglas and Gesell. The list is longer, but far from endless. Pound's apparently enormous learning dazzles more by its deployment than by its extent, and is easier to track down and absorb than that of, say, Coleridge. His political and economic radicalism is as much a development of the 19th century tradition of revolt as his poetry is a development of late-romanticism. Nor is he the only distinguished Confucian and Mencian in the modern West.

Most misunderstandings and shallow estimates of Pound seem to be due to inverting or confounding the importance of Pound's various *personae.* Two years ago, reviewing the *Pisan Cantos,* I agreed with Allen Tate that Pound has always been in a "muddle of revolution." But for Mr. Tate, as I hope for myself, this stance was more polemical than careless. To put first things first, one must devise strategies of indifference as well as strategies of praise. It is indeed fairly wonderful that Pound has done all that thinking, all that reading, and all that crusading. The impulse towards such ferocious activity seems to me more heroic than comic, though it has its comic side. "Ezra Pound," writes Wyndham Lewis, "is probably a poet of a higher and rarer order than it is easy at all times to realize, because of much irrelevant dust kicked up by his personality as it rushes, strides, or charges across the temporal scene." In other words, if we want more than a mere thinker, scholar or crusader (and Pound is by his own admission no more than an inspired dilettante at all these things) we must play favorites among the *personae.* We need this strategy especially when the lesser *personae* invade the greater. One of his poses, for example, seems to me as trifling as it is sensational and misleading, a sort of amalgam of old goat, corn-fed satyr, Yellow Book diabolist and late-Roman courtier, who writes "naked" and "impudent" little songs and indulges in hearty ironies about anemic little girls at the Russian Ballet or the epigones of Kensington Park. He does these poems without much energy of perception or language, as a way of combining the classical epigram with vorticist perception in a mildly instructive sort of verse whose virtues are principally negative. This is Pound the

[1]THE HUDSON REVIEW. Vol. III No. 1, Spring 1950.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

teacher invading Pound the poet, and it takes up a disproportionate amount of space in *Lustra* and *Ripostes*. Transfigured, it becomes the great lyric ironist of *Mauberley*. Perhaps the best example of Pound the crusader on the rampage are the "hell" Cantos, XIV and XV. For all their mordant power, these Cantos are dramatically inert. Pound's discursive matter is simply not able to explain just *why* and *how* these villains infallibly operate to corrupt great art; he can merely appeal to convention and assert that they do. They fail to live exactly as do Milton's Father and Son in *Paradise Lost*. Pound has committed categories rather than people to damnation, and the whole affair becomes an affront to our sense of proportion.

Let me attack his pyramid of interests at its base to see how these distortions come about. Pound has vilified our modern system of financial speculation and floating credit with enormous gusto. Though he clairvoyantly perceives its abuses, he has not, it seems to me, ever really grasped its rationale. A truly humanistic intelligence would hardly impute the whole of such a massive arrangement to malice and frivolity. The greed, the malice, the fatigue, and the gaming instinct are all, of course, mixed into it, but the analyst's part, surely, is to find out what more meaningful adventure of the mind it has supported and made possible. Yeats, the Irish bard, folklorist and spiritualist, can be most easily forgiven for not taking this trouble, but Pound comes from a land where provincialism is itself a phase and motive of technocracy. Franz Borkenau, writing in a recent issue of *Commentary*, gets the perspective we want: "Precisely because of the deeply spiritual character of this technological revolution, precisely because of the intimate connection between technology and freedom, because of the inseparability of Western (and *only* Western) technological, economic and political development, all aiming at freeing the life and spirit of the individual, it is an offense against our most precious values to exalt other aspects of our culture, such as literature, art, and religion. . . ." This is the extreme view, with the merit of pointing out that Science is still in perhaps the majority of Western minds both an art and a religion, and the obvious demerit of making too much of a good observation. But has any inkling of this side of the matter appeared in Pound's writings? If he has read Whitehead's great handbook, *Science and the Modern World*, no sign appears in *Culture* or the Letters. (Characteristically he descants in several places on the *beauty* of tools and machines.) The modern metropolis which moved Spengler to such dolorous threnody was not, after all, built by the lash of Pharaohs. The idea of material progress, now so grievously dragged in the mud of Soviet cant, was once a living faith on a very simple level, and it is this faith and practice, I suppose, which seemed to require our complex systems of usury and floating credit.

Confucius, Dante, and the medieval contemners of *usura* were theorizing about a predominantly agrarian economy, and so, more or less, were Jefferson and Van Buren. Whether our American economy is 'basically' agrarian or in-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dustrial is still a matter of dispute. Just as industry threatens to swallow the remnants of landed independence, a new movement towards the atomization and dispersal of industry gets under way. Pound believes that as we become less provincial we will need a more explicit, proximate ethical code than we have inherited from the Fathers. He also shares the whole movement of modern theory towards the *Urphänomen,* which set Goethe, for example, wandering about the countryside looking for the most *Ur* among the visible organisms. "Humanity is malleable mud, and art sets the mold it is later cast into," Pound writes in one letter, and, "I'm the kind of ass who believes in the public intelligence." His concern for the *Ur*-ethic of the sophisticated American future, to be revealed and demonstrated in art, leads him, further, into an extremely interesting comparative critique, in *Culture,* of Confucius and Aristotle. He wants the Great Learning (*Ta Hio*), the Doctrine of the Mean and the *Analects,* to supplement, or even supplant, the *Nicomachean Ethics* in the Anglo-American system of Greats. Aristotle, Pound refreshingly observes, in spite of the richness, complexity and humanity of his ethics, is far from a model of clarity, and his style is obviously "late" and a bit world-weary, as well as limited by a slave-society at the bottom and contemplative stasis at the top. (The incongruity between Pound's behaviour and his pacific Confucian ideals is more apparent than real. "Being intemperate," he once wrote, "I should prefer dynamite, but in measured moments I know that all violence is useless, even the violence of language.") But he typically refrains from applying a critique of style to the rich and haphazard phenomenon of Kung. For Kung is as much a "late" theorist as Aristotle, wrapped in his dream of feudal dynastic harmony. Yeats is inevitably more profound when, instead of opting for one exclusive system, he writes: "We require a new statement of moral doctrine which shall be accepted by the average man but be at the same time beyond his power in practice." In so far as our American economy remains fundamentally classless or single-classed, based on inter-locking family and handicraft groups, Confucius may conceivably have as much to offer as Aristotle. But as soon as we develop hierarchies of wealth, or go in for "conspicuous consumption" in political, moral and spiritual affairs—parliaments, congresses, churches, and monasteries—we will probably find more use in Aristotle. Confucius keeps one's nose to the dynastic and economic grindstone; his mixture of conservatism and radicalism is amazingly close to Jeffersonian enlightened agrarianism—private property taxed on the tithe system, "hard" money, music, ceremony, disciplined benevolence. But the creation by society of vast systems of status for the contemplation of itself and the official guardianship of its religious energy is an Aristotelian notion. Largely because Confucius has had so little to offer monastic thought, Oriental monasticism and mysticism have been socially sterile, unproductive of constructive metaphors of society. You have the practical dynasts like Sun Yat Sen and Mao on one side, Pound's despised and obstructive

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Taozers" on the other. But our Western monasticism has given us discourses ranging from the *Summa* of St. Thomas to the rational mysticism of John Scotus Eriugena—and this because like all Western institutions it has been founded ultimately on the Platonic-Aristotelian analogy from *techné*. Instead of Confucius's vague and rather thin concept of the "unwobbling pivot" you have a great structure, in Plato and Aristotle, of analogies derived from observing the *art* of statesmanship, and the *art* of building by habit and discipline an ethical character. I'm not attempting to do justice to Kung's astonishing inwardness and psychological subtlety, but my impression is that the Greek combination of psychology, ethics and cosmology is a good deal more flexible than Kung's rather rigid adherence to the dynastic ritual. It allows for more improvization.

Pound's assault on Christianity, Judaism and monotheism-in-general is un-Confucian. Where Kung ignored "spiritual beings," Pound has written that "religion is the root of all evil, or damn near all." In recent years his animosity has tended to concentrate on what the Church did or did not do about usury, but the general line of thought runs about as follows, from a letter to Henry Swabey of 1940, "Xtianity a poor substitute for the truth, but the best canned goods that can be put on the market immediately in sufficient quantity for the general pubk.??? I admit the problem is difficult. Mebbe best line is to get rid of worst and rottenest phases first, i.e., the old testy-munk . . . and gradually detach Dantescan light (peeling off the Middle Ages bit by bit. . . .)" All this is familiar as the barroom Hellenism of the time. One finds it more arduously expanded in Mencken's *Treatise on the Gods*. When he attacks Christianity for falling short of its ideals, he merely echoes the cry of thinking men of all ages of Christendom, within and without the Church. But the thinness and sentimentality of his main attack is more especially, I believe, the product of the same milieu that formed Nietzsche,—late 19th century Protestantism, with its headlong ambition to make the best of all possible worlds in the least possible time. The Catholic conditioning of Yeats and Joyce greatly tempered their "paganism" and made them cast about for some universal sanction for charity. Pound writes in *Culture* to the effect that "only in basically pagan Italy has Christianity escaped becoming a nuisance. Only there has it escaped the dastardly fanaticisms which grow into it in more barbarous climates." A lordly stroke, indeed! But what about Savonarola? And what about the Cathari[2], that most fanatical of medieval Christian sects which set the style for modern sectarianism, started the Inquisition, and caused the Albigensian Crusade which crushed Pound's Provençal songbirds and much else besides? They flourished at Asti and Orvieto as well as in Provence. That passion for purity which accounts for troubadour and Cathari in one milieu accounts also for much of the genius and fanaticism of Pound.

---

[2]*Catholic Encyclopedia.*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Pity spareth so many an evil thing.
Pity befouleth April,
Pity is the root and the spring.
Now if no fayre creature followeth me
It is on account of Pity
It is on account Pity forbiddeth them slaye . . .[3]

What would Confucius have thought of *that,* apart from admiring its beauty on the page?

To pass from the fanaticism to the *maestria,* we can readily see that Pound is himself an inheritor of the best energies of technocracy. He has been able to attack formalism from within formalism, and refine texture without sacrificing structure. His careful study of the Provençal lyric opened his eyes to the classical principle that *no* measurable kind of metrical regularity is *essential* for great poetry. "The terms iambic and trochaic," he writes in the Arnaut Daniel essay, "are, however, utterly inaccurate when applied to syllabic metres set to a particular melody." His own poetry, like all good English lyric, is neither wholly syllabic nor wholly accentual, and more, probably, than any other English poet except Shakespeare and Tennyson he has exploited this formal freedom to good ends. While epic and ballad tend toward rising rhythms and simple patterns of recurrence, shorter lyric forms are capable of almost unlimited variety, depending on the ear, dramatic instinct, and general vitality of the poet. Yeats hit on the same principle by his less scholarly methods. The most flexible bel-canto, the utmost naturalness of tone, is compatible with the most complex verse forms. And conversely, in Cavalcanti's *La Donna Mi Pregha,* he found that the most weighted and exact scientific discourse could be made wholly poetic, if not at times even magical. Pound as a critic-teacher has been able, at his best, to shed those demons which all-too-unconsciously coerce most theorists: poetry-as-manners, poetry-as-education, poetry-as-stunt, poetry-as-uplift, and to concentrate, in brief luminous flashes, on poetry wholly as something *done,* something *made.* This recklessness, this fine critical *sprezzatura,* brought Pound, as it brought Yeats and his circle, back to poetry as song, and song as poetry. A transcription of a song by Janequin becomes interchangeable in the *Cantos* with "translation" from Homer.

In counting Pound among the masters of the English lyric, I intend the word in both a wider and a more determinate sense than would be implied in such a phrase as "a writer of lyric poetry." In other words, it is the *lyric element* in Pound, the amount and intensity of living language (no matter what rhetorical modes he may adopt, and throughout this review I use the term "rhetoric" in the wide neo-scholastic sense in which *all* poetry is rhetoric when seen as a "means of persuasion") which marks certain high places in his verse; and it is the power of this verse to live apart from its occasions, or any local

[3]Canto XXX.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

or temperamental qualifications, that defines his greatness. Eliot made virtually the same claim for Tennyson, and if it were not for Pound's dislike of Tennyson I think we would readily admit their kinship. Though Pound may ultimately stand below Yeats as a lyric poet, he is certainly the conscious inheritor of a whole romantic tradition, founded on Shakespeare, the Cavaliers and Herrick, and recently enriched by a study of Chinese and Provençal. If he learned to avoid, and helped Yeats avoid, the late-romantic evaporation, he still remained true to the lyric as a form and to the lyric ideal in general. I realize the imprecision which follows any effort to pin down a word like "lyric." The arrangement of anthologies like Robert Bridges's *The Spirit of Man* or Horace Gregory's admirable *The Triumph of Life* shows that in spite of our greater critical self-consciousness we still cling to the principles behind Stedman's Reader or Charles Dana's *Household Book of Poetry* when it comes to assembling a miscellaneous group of short lyrics in one place. Perhaps it is just as well. In any event, when Pound commenced his career, the lyric in America was either inspirational or fanciful, the rare moments of vision and precision usually passing without rational comment.

Tell me not in mournful wish-wash
Life's a sort of sugared dish-wash!

is Pound's comment on American pre-Sandburgian poesy (with huge injustice to Robinson). In order to distinguish lyric from rhetoric without, like Yeats, separating them into the expression of two different faculties (will and imagination), I should like to summon up its association with song, and with the stances, occasions and instruments of song. Bypassing both the folkish movement and the modern art-song of the genus Oley Speaks, we can thereby make a gesture towards the wholeness of response, the multifarious rhetorical and dramatic action, the *cantabile* quality, which the lyric seemed to have lost for good in the "permanent wave" of Poe and Swinburne, the symbolist impressionism of Mallarmé and Rimbaud, or the ironic play of Gautier, Laforgue and Corbière (though the latter is certainly in a few poems a great lyric poet, and all the others have lyric genius of the first order). In 1918 Pound wrote: "I desire also to resurrect the art of the lyric . . ."

Pound's poetic *corpus* can be treated as rhetoric and epigram as well as lyric. I would put the semantic analysis, and the sort of half-hearted technical appraisal of his diction and his elegant, animated "surface" which Pound has elicited until very recently, under the heading of rhetoric. Mr. Blackmur in *The Double Agent* is very good on language in *Propertius* and Mr. Leavis in *New Bearings* is very good on wit and language in *Mauberley*. I entirely share the enthusiasm of these critics for these two works, without understanding their neglect of the earlier lyrics, the lyric element in general, or their failure to discriminate between levels of excitement and beauty in the poems they praise. Irony is always a great commodity in the universities and *Mauberley* will doubtless always be the academic *point d'appui* to Pound. But the gulf which

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

separates such glories of the earlier books as "Portrait D'une Femme" or "The Seafarer" from the richer, slower splendors of *Propertius* is one of speed, weight, color, and finish, rather than of kind. As for the argument that Pound cannot be emotionally involved in a "translation," I see no less reason for Pound's involvement in a vision of Marius and Jugurtha moving over Acheron than for Dante's excitement at finding Ugolino among the shades. What Pound does is to project the classical timbre by a clever adjustment of normal English speed within the line to abnormally slow periods, moving always towards a ground-tone in chant. And chant is certainly one of the *Ur*-forms of poetry. In the *Cantos,* chant and song-rhythms are sometimes written separately and sometimes, as in the Artemis and Usura Cantos, woven together. The truth is that the poetry prior to *Mauberley* is uneven, like all of Pound, but full of good anthology pieces nevertheless. Not all of *Propertius,* either, is equal to VI or VII,

> *In how many varied embraces, our changing arms,*
> *Her kisses, how many, lingering on my lips.*
> *"Turn not Venus into a blinded motion,*
> *Eyes are the guides of love . . ."*

nor in the same mode. Some is just rhetorical fun:

> *Thus much the fates have allotted me, and if, Maecenas,*
> *I were able to lead heroes into armour, I would not,*
> *Neither would I warble of Titans, nor of Ossa*
> *spiked onto Olympus,*
> *Nor of causeways over Pelion,*
> *Nor of Thebes in its ancient respectability,*
> *nor of Homer's reputation in Pergamus . . .*

nor does all of *Mauberley* have the same extraordinary metrical and verbal perfection, with an emotional and moral complexity which raises the topical subject to timelessness, of poem I, or "The Age Demanded" (not poem II).

When you examine the *Cantos* I think you have to agree with Mr. Kenner that they are "informed," given their rationale and raison d'être, by their lyric element. If one could say the same of *Paradise Lost* or the *Divina Commedia,* using my wide definition of lyric, one would not say it in quite the same way. In the *Cantos* it is not the poet as commentator, nor the culture as judge speaking through the poet's mouth, but simply *the great lyric moments as artifacts* which judge and dispose the rest of the material. In their light, as gifts of the gods to the poet and through him to the rest of his society, Pound's values are clarified and arranged. *Il ne sait que bien faire!* This view of the *Cantos,* though perfectly reasonable, is of course somewhat mystical, inasmuch as the "low," anecdotal or hortatory parts of the poem are also given a suave and cultivated metric. It is analogous to Socrates's claim that *truly* to know the right is never to do wrong. The doing and the knowing are one. In the high lyrical moments of the *Cantos,* Pound's craft and his wisdom are most fully present. Yeats's finest lyrics, by which he wanted ultimately to be judged, tend

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

toward a self-contained motionless motion, a rapt vision of beauty-in-action. According to the Joycean definition whereby an "epiphany" is the moment when an aspect of life reaches its fullest clarity and passes into timelessness, these lyric episodes serve, in the *Cantos*, as the keystone to Pound's poetic arch, his motionless flight, his *itinerarium mentis in coelum*. With a fine Aristotelian resonance, Yeats gives a formula for the method he used in common with Eliot and Pound: "I have found *a new delight in essences* (my italics), in states of mind, in pure imagination, in all that comes to us most easily in elaborate music." *Essences—delight—states of mind—easily—music:* these words avoid the dark and "brutal" (Yeats's word) side of modern poetry, but they perfectly summarize the light,—the way in which three great poets have compromised with a critical, archaeological and spiritually static age.

To display Pound's lyric powers, it may be best to choose what anybody would call "a lyric," perhaps the first in which his quality is uniformly good.

A VIRGINAL

No, no! Go from me. I have left her lately.
I will not spoil my sheath with lesser brightness,
For my surrounding air hath a new lightness;
Slight are her arms, yet they have bound me straitly
And left me cloaked as with a gauze of aether;
As with sweet leaves; as with subtle clearness.
Oh, I have picked up magic in her nearness
To sheathe me half in half the things that sheathe her.
No, no! Go from me. I have still the flavour,
Soft as spring wind that's come from birchen bowers.
Green come the shoots, aye April in the branches,
As winter's wound with her sleight hand she staunches,
Hath of the trees a likeness of the savour:
As white their bark, so white this lady's hours.

This little lyric, with its archaic diction and standard romantic properties, is as artificial as anything by Poe, yet with what a difference! We seem to have moved from a Gothic swamp to some catholic center of light and movement. The archaism and romanticism are completely transformed by the intensity of the poetic process. If the poem is as good as I think it is, it would presumably lend itself to the usual devices of close reading. "Sheathe" and "straitly" have their meanings mildly enlarged and played upon. But on the whole the purely semantic excitement is as low as its diction is "pure" and clear. In a way, it represents a withdrawal from the more vividly imagined "Lady of Shallot" or "La Belle Dame Sans Merci," but without losing any essential poetic elements. Its poignancy derives from a blend of tough and tenuous,—in language, metrical movement, gesture, and clarity of organization. Though as much an "exercize" as Pound's lovely translation of the Provençal *alba* in *Langue D'oc* IV, "In orchard under the hawthorne . . .," it is deeply felt, with an undertone

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of that generalized elegiac emotion which Milton puts into *Lycidas*. Shakespeare's metrical recklessness and *curiosa felicitas* is abandoned in favor of a Mediterranean *clarté*. Nor does he attempt Keats's and Tennyson's march and clotting of heavy vowels. It is more consciously visionary and remote from the poet's immediate life than the Cavaliers or Herrick, particularly more elegiac. Finally, it is the anti-type rather than the type of the thing he repudiates in *Mauberley*, which give us a clue, perhaps, to his unreasonable antipathy to Tennyson. Tennyson had the metrics but rarely the sinew. From *A Virginal* to the high points of the *Cantos* one perceives a refinement of technique, a wider and more specific subject matter, but no great change of vision or method. If we have a firm sense of what Pound can do in these short lyrics, we will be less afraid of boggling in what later-on appears at first to be merely a sort of Alma-Tadema classicism, but is actually full of movement and the seeds of movement.

The essays in the Russell collection move between the limits of speculation I've tried to outline. Eliot reminisces and temporizes amiably; Hemingway orates acceptably; the Tate is familiar and still sound as far as it goes, I think. Edith Sitwell makes a surprising amount of sense in a fairly labored and notional essay of 1934, speaking of "Pound's natural, free, and beautiful movements according to the law of his nature." A Pound economics disciple, Henry Swabey, of whom we hear praise in the Letters, turns out to be one of those heroic eccentrics still bred in the Church of England. His essay, "Towards an A.B.C. of History" is more touching, I should say, than subversive, in spite of its anti-New-Deal animus. (Perhaps he *may*, like the Shakers or the Mennonites, set up a small, stable quasi-theocracy on sound social-credit lines.) Most of the political casuistry is concentrated into a very bad piece by Brian Soper, a discouraging mixture of high thought and cloudy motives. "Taking sides meant nothing to him," writes Mr. Soper. I can't believe that Pound would endorse this sort of defense. The anti-semitism, after all, is indefensible; one simply notes it and weighs it against the rest. Hugh Gordon Porteus writes an enlightening study of Pound's relation to the Chinese; two of the critics point out that there *is* a traditional dialectic in banking, as Arthur Schlesinger dramatized it in *The Age of Jackson*, between the hard money school of the bank of Siena, with its credit founded on the agrarian concept of "the abundance of nature," and the bank which finances, to its own profit, a speculative, usurious system of floating credit in which time, confidence, social status and initiative are commodities to be bought and sold.

The freshest thought in the book is divided between Mr. Kenner's "New Subtlety of Eyes" and a piece by G. S. Fraser. The contrast between the tones of voice of these two gentlemen is itself a cultural comedy. Mr. Kenner, resplendent in the full armament of enlightened neo-thomism, is all staccato motion; parry, thrust and counter-thrust. He has a constitutional need to demolish some perhaps excessively foolish opponent as he goes along, in one essay

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the *Saturday Review* type of critic, in this essay no less than Milton, as theologian and moral sage, who becomes in Mr. Kenner's scheme the tyrant of all English poetry since the 17th century. But with all the sometimes overplayed gusto, one delights in Mr. Kenner's intellectual flair; his thomist vocabulary of rational souls, moving energies, and substantial forms is peculiarly suited to Pound the student of Dante and Cavalcanti, and sometimes puts a conceptual platform under intuitions which Pound could not formulate exactly. Unfortunately, it is too much a feature of the Kenner Pound that he relentlessly succeed; and we miss that element of heroic but bitter failure which enriches the tone and qualifies the greatness of all of Pound's work.

Nevertheless, nearly all that a passion for order and articulateness can do to make Pound luminous is done by Mr. Kenner. But when a critic with the sympathy and experience of T. S. Eliot writes of the *longueurs* of the Chinese and American *Cantos,* and when common sense protests the amount of dull and fuzzy material mixed into the splendor and elegance of the Pisan sequence, we have to admit that striking as Pound's method is, and seminal as it very well may be, it has not yet been brought to anything like perfection. The point of failure, as I've tried to indicate, seems to lie at the place where the poet's private spiritual culture dictates his artistic and intellectual culture. But if it *is* failure, it fails with only a shade less of the grandeur with which *Paradise Lost* succeeds. We shall probably not live to see another such attempt. Meanwhile we must observe that the *Cantos* are composed not only of the massive "note" of order, but also of the stuff of darkness, the *atra cura* of a desperately belligerent life.

If the hoar frost grip thy tent
Thou wilt give thanks when night is spent.

The Odyssey that ends in the "nox animae magna from the tent under Taishan" has had its price, and our formal requirements are not entirely satisfied to recall that:

"Odysseus
"Shalt return through spiteful Neptune, over dark seas,
"Lose all companions."

The mythical patterns of voyage, descent to hell, misburial, courtship of Artemis-Circe, etc., are unable, finally, to break up and digest the tendentious matter. In spite of lovely inwoven echoes and lyric respites, I think we lose the thread. The acceleration of the *Pisan Cantos* would seem to demand an exceptional pungency and vividness in the "low" as well as the "high" moments, but this is not the case. But who would be rash enough to assert that all the power and charm of this great, uneven poem has already revealed itself? In any event, I don't think the *buffo,* or the quality of self-criticism he reveals, *should* ever be forgotten. The great Pound has true *hilaritas,* the hilarity, for instance, of Yeats's ridiculous relationship to George Moore, the hilarity of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dickens peopling the world with monsters, the "intoxicated vision" of the great lyric poet. In its light we forget for a moment the "single strained attitude" of the "sexless American professor."[4]

I've saved Mr. Fraser for the last since he is the most concerned with taking an intelligent worm's-eye view of the matter. He puts it with more than typical British understatement: "In these masks or roles of Pound's the inadequacies of an eager American eclecticism, and of various primitive or archaic attitudes, not easily revivable in contemporary terms, do seem to combine, after all, as something poetically adequate." He opines that Pound's *real* containing metaphor is the establishment of stability in art and government, on all levels of life, by strenuous acts of renewal. Finally, Mr. Fraser makes as successful a stab as any I've read at defining Pound's larger failures: "It is Pound's weakness . . . to be able to spot evil in his enemies and not in himself and his friends. He has been right to stand up for human dignity in an age in which there has been an almost hysterical sense of guilt. But there is a sense, and perhaps he has failed to recognize this, in which human dignity is itself a *persona*, a mask, a role."

The best we can say of all our wranglings over this tragic figure is that they have brought us closer to those moments in which Pound will continue to live intensely, moments which will continue to delight, though they may not "save" us, when

> . . . *change hath broken down*
> *All things save Beauty alone.*

[4]Yeats's criticism in a letter to Dorothy Wellesley.

R. W. B. LEWIS

Fitzgerald's Way[1]

HISTORY MOVES TOWARDS LEGEND when the facts fall more or less naturally into a familiar arrangement and tell us a story which we recognize. In the case of Scott Fitzgerald, both the story of the life and the story of the stories have this quality: they have form and can be identified; they fulfill our pre-existing anticipations, some of them desperate ones. The degree to which Fitzgerald was aware of his private pattern was not much less than awesome, and it lent his prose (both in letters and in fiction) a tantalizing and troubling duplicity. His phrases and plots tremble on the verge of yielding up their own commentaries on themselves; and his heroes, like the heroes of Shakespeare, are able inter-

[1]THE FAR SIDE OF PARADISE, by *Arthur Mizener*. Houghton Mifflin. $3.75. THE STORIES OF F. SCOTT FITZGERALD, edited and with an introduction by *Malcolm Cowley*. Scribner's. $3.75.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

mittently—but only intermittently—to spot the pre-designed role they are enacting. The Fitzgerald character stands somewhere between, say, the Dos Passos character, who reveals almost no sense of dramatic position, and the Faulkner character who can reflect at the age of sixteen that "It was like the last act on a set stage." And as to the life, it is to be remarked that Fitzgerald's narratives are extensions of his life in a literal and uncommon way. They may be poetic summaries of past experience (*This Side of Paradise* or the Basil series); but they may also be extensions into a poetically just future. It has been suggested that Dante meant to show how, had he fallen like Paolo, he would have wound up like Ugolino: there is this kind of projection in *Tender Is the Night*, and we can detect it also in *The Great Gatsby* and in most of the stories selected by Mr. Cowley. It is the mark of Fitzgerald's curious feeling for the legend he was participating in, and although personally trapped in time he could round out the legend again and again in his fiction—taking who knows what fatalistic and romantic satisfaction in the performance of the symbolic act.

Mr. Mizener's biography fails us exactly insofar as he resists the tendency of his facts to fall into the familiar arrangement. Most of the facts are there (though I have looked in vain for a number of Fitzgerald's alleged literary opinions). But as they follow one another in Mr. Mizener's soft and amiable prose, all the facts have an equal value; and so, in a very queer way indeed, nothing much seems to happen. Partly, this is because we are offered neither the explanation nor the means of an explanation for Fitzgerald's aberrations—or, what was more remarkable, for his endurance and his steady, unique development, in spite of those aberrations. Partly, this is because we cannot see Fitzgerald in relation to anything recognizable. For example: the Irish-Catholic background, with its contradictory intermixtures, goes almost unmentioned as such, while ancestral names and places are paraded before us in an almost meaningless file; yet surely this background is a substantial clue to the inventor of names like Nick Carraway, Dick Diver and Michael Curly. Or another example: Fitzgerald's relations with Wilson, Bishop, Dos Passos and Thomas Wolfe get scant attention and are in no way distinguished from other relationships, though we know from those sources that they could reveal a good deal about the man who wanted "to be one of the greatest writers who ever lived." I am not referring to the lack of sustained literary criticism, for Mr. Mizener does not claim to offer a critical biography; and besides, he has included some fine observations, especially on *The Last Tycoon*, which are obviously the product of many years of thinking and talking about Fitzgerald's style and the genre of his fiction. What we want more of is the sort of treatment Mr. Mizener gives to Fitzgerald's "imaginative involvement with wealth"; for here the facts are set off and ordered by the psychological questions they raise, and sharpness and point are thereby added to the biographical narrative. What we miss, most of the time, is what Fitzgerald himself was always in search of: a field for enterprises and conflict; a *scene* in which actors could stand in visible relation to each other; a "situation."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Only towards the end of his career, however, did Fitzgerald find the setting or the situation he had been looking for, and the point of view he needed; and if *The Last Tycoon* was potentially his richest achievement, it was largely because of what Dos Passos called its "frame of reference." The best novels of Dos Passos had suffered an opposite defect and had tended to be all situation and no hero; he was peculiarly sensitive to Fitzgerald's discovery—a discovery emerging from the interaction of the Hollywood industry and the special glance Fitzgerald turned upon it.

This search and this development are central factors in any discussion of Fitzgerald, or of his "relation to society." The outline is obscure, but it is definite: for if all of Fitzgerald's most memorable characters are finally broken by society, some of them, especially in the early stories, are destroyed trying to get *inside*; and some of them, especially in the later stories, are destroyed because they are too much in the center, too much in the sun. In the former case, we have the sad and brilliant series of initiation rites gone wrong—like a college initiation in which the joke gets out of hand and the pledge is injured or killed. In the latter case, we have the brutal and perhaps necessary tribal drama of the scapegoat: the ludicrous Christ, the despised vessel of society's confession and absolution. This was the way traversed by Fitzgerald—from initiate to scapegoat; it is unmistakably the story of the stories, and when it is told in a manner faithful to its legendary form, it will turn out also to be the story of the life.

II

All the writing by or about Fitzgerald cannot help but shed light on the same thing, seen in a multiplicity of versions. For it was always a matter of building a workable relation to the world: of learning how to cope with the conventional disposition of the social order, and with, we might say, its moral trajectory. As a man, Fitzgerald was anxious to go up higher and make more friends—to rise in paradise; but as a writer, he had no less painfully to come to terms with society. He had even to decide upon the proper genre for fiction. The fuzzy alternations between realism, romance and fantasy, in a collection like *Tales of the Jazz Age,* indicated more than boyish good spirits, free-wheeling experimentation or a bright eye for the current magazines. Fitzgerald was trying each one on for size, hoping to discover which genre best fitted the odd jumble of vulgarity and chivalric dream which characterized the world he had in his few years lived through. He never doubted that this was the serious business of the novelist; and knowing so, he made a heroic attempt to find his fable in a society he had personally experienced.

Nor did he, for all his exasperation, take for his subject the pain of the effort itself.[2] This is the normal romantic solution. But Scott Fitzgerald, the type of

[2]A discouraging exception would have been the never finished *Count of Darkness,* a story set in the tenth century and concerned with a writer modelled on Hemingway. It is probably not surprising that the parts he wrote of it were, according to Arthur Mizener, "as bad as anything (he) ever wrote."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scapegoat-artist, made no profit out of his frustration; with a couple of minor exceptions ("The Lee Shore," for example), he did not write about writers, but about crooks or doctors or rich boys or architects or engineers or script-writers or producers. He watched himself carefully enough; but he watched the world too; and most of the time he knew which was which.

This is to say that he was a romantic of a very special order; in a small way, as he knew even at three o'clock in the morning, he was an original. But for every romantic, the chief tragic requirement of life arises from the necessity of growing-up; and all of Fitzgerald's personal, stylistic and fable-making efforts towards coping with society can be understood as so many efforts to grow up. Fitzgerald managed or avoided the process in the romantic manner, but I suspect it is the peculiarly native brand of romanticism which explains him, rather than the European or English variety: despite the self-sacrificing urge of his heroes and his own manifest fondness for the odes of John Keats. The stories up to and including *The Great Gatsby*, are, I suggest, attached essentially to the local tradition of the unfallen innocent—the godlike young man exempted from family and race, dreaming a pure dream nourished by the unfolding and undefined west: the hero of the vast inchoate legend of The American Adam. No such figure was conceivable in England or on the continent; but American fiction and poetry threw up image after image of this absurd, attractive and helpless fellow. He ought to have disappeared, along with Turner's frontier, before the turn of the century; but if Fitzgerald commits him once again to his inevitable catastrophe in a story of the twenties, Adam at least has a suitably changed appearance and encounters his incomprehensibly evil enemy in a suitably new guise. The uninitiated innocent is buried beneath a guessed-at corruption and hidden in a gorgeous pink rag of a suit; Whitman's singer of Adamic songs has got himself somehow involved with the man who fixed the World Series of 1919; the old hero is as veiled from the eye as the flock of sheep Nick Carraway almost imagines seeing on Fifth Avenue one summer afternoon. But he is there all the time, greatly there; and he has failed once again, and now with a kind of finality, to grasp the fact of wickedness, and so to survive, and so to grow up.

Nevertheless, with *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald himself grew up, though he was not always ready to act his age. When he returned, as he often did, to the theme of the abortive initiation, it was apt to constitute the prelude to a quite different main action. Joel Coles, for example, the script-writer in "Crazy Sunday," makes one clumsy venture towards getting inside the group by putting on an impromptu performance at a Hollywood party; it is met with the boos which Joel recognizes at once as "the resentment of the professional towards the amateur, of the community towards the stranger, the thumbs-down of the clan." Later, by maneuvering more cautiously, he edges his way in—to the point where (in a grotesque and faultless climax) the problem becomes suddenly how he can best escape. This was indeed the new problem. Fitzgerald was now drawn more and more to the drama of the individual caught inside the group but not genuinely *of* it: like Dick Diver, trapped within by his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

own gifts and his own charity, and ground to death by normal processes of the tribal machine. This was the drama of the scapegoat, which the Gatsbys, Jelly-Beans and Starretts had avoided in their disastrous ways. It would have culminated in the tragedy of Monroe Stahr, a man apart from his world by virtue of being above it—by virtue of having almost literally created it; the only person who could save it, and hence its most inevitable victim.

III

A few notes may be added, with the aid of Mr. Cowley's volume, on Fitzgerald's style: his "celebrated style," which has been more often celebrated than identified. The style is of course not to be identified apart from the substance of the stories, and it is another mark of Fitzgerald's stature that his style is not intended to call attention to itself, but to illuminate the action or character or thought that it is standing for. His words are never in love with themselves. But along with his directness, his strength and his accuracy, there are also qualities of melody and brightness; so that Fitzgerald's prose not only lights up its object, it also makes us conscious of the shadows that lie around it. This is to say that Fitzgerald mastered what must be the supreme problem for the American novelist, in his steadily more successful accommodation of the visible and concrete to the ideal or ethical. The story of the style would be one of a development towards this end, and it could be summarized in three stages: in the first, the fusion is imperfect, and the prose consists of conventional phrasing interrupted by occasional darts of realistic detail; in the second, the convention acts as a counter-poise—it is being used by Fitzgerald to designate possible false habits of perception; and in the third, the convention has been absorbed and reprojected in a fresh and vital form. It can readily be seen that the story of the style is not different from the other stories: the second stage, for example, can be recognized in the long list of tales in which the hero attempts success in conventional terms (money, fame and power), and in which the point of the story is precisely the catastrophic intrusion of an actual rhythm of life into the meretricious fairy-tale formula.

Here is an instance of the earliest style, from "Bernice Bobs her Hair":

> The balcony was inside. . . . At these Saturday-night dances it was largely feminine; a great babel of middle-aged ladies with sharp eyes and icy hearts behind lorgnettes and large bosoms. The main function of the balcony was critical.

There is a rhythm there and a half-achieved control; but the visible is left slightly blurred and the ethical more than slightly empty, by the relative lack of fusion. And the later style, from "The Bridal Party":

> At first Michael was afraid and his stomach felt hollow. When he left the hotel that morning, the *femme de chambre* who was in love with his fine, sharp profile and his pleasant buoyancy, scented the hard abstraction that had settled over him.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

By this time, the concrete and the ethical stand in a dynamic relation to each other: and this relation, indeed, is also the heart of the action itself. I cannot offer an example of Fitzgerald's style in his last years, when he had moved beyond wonder and nostalgia—an entire short story (perhaps "The Last Decade") would have to be quoted by way of illustration. What strikes us there as honesty is in fact the achievement of twenty years of dedication to his chosen business; it is the honesty, won at terrific expense, that we feel in the confessional essays published in *The Crack-Up*. There is a passage in *Tender Is the Night* which gives us the best metaphor we are likely to get, as a description of the art of Fitzgerald. It occurs in the first part of the novel, and describes Rosemary's relation to the Divers:

> Her naivité responded whole-heartedly to the expensive simplicity of the Divers, unaware of its complexity and its lack of innocence, unaware that it was all a selection of quality rather than quantity from the run of the world's bazaar; and that the simplicity of behavior also, the nursery-like peace and good will, the emphasis on the simpler virtues, was part of a desperate bargain with the gods and had been attained through struggles she could not have guessed at.

ROBERT FITZGERALD

An Heir and His Inheritance

NONES, by *W. H. Auden*, Random House. $2.50.

POETS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE, edited by *W. H. Auden* and *Norman Holmes Pearson*. The Viking Portable Library (5 Vols.) Viking Press. $2.50 per Vol.

THESE NEW ITEMS, EACH IN ITS WAY perfected a little beyond Auden's previous achievement, make me think the time is at hand for a fresh and serious study of this writer's work as poet, critic and editor. Or perhaps it is not quite time; certainly it is never time, with a subject like this, for the sort of critical writing that closes the book, or seals up all in rest. In any case I can volunteer only a first note toward the kind of study that now seems appropriate.

If writers of verse were planets, Auden would have described in his orbit ten revolutions to one for most others, not because his swing was shorter but by reason of high velocity. Many must have wished from time to time that he would slow down and shine more steadily somewhere, upon something; but then doubtless it would occur to them that the wish was invidious and vain. His poems almost never failed as performances; whatever else he did, he re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

freshed attention (the music of the preferred ages, written so often for court performance, is like this) and one had to be grateful for that.

On the other hand: virtuosity was not his greatest gift. Twenty years ago when people in England were reading for the first time "Sir, no man's enemy," or "O love, the interest itself in thoughtless heaven," they recognized something they had barely known they knew—a landscape electrifying and sombre, strewn with moral and material junk, such as only an authentic vision could have registered or brought into language. The point of view was modern-historical-social-scientific; it was also pre-Roman and unchristened, and Auden's wizardry, though on occasion transparently mischievous and overworked, had no precedent among the magics of literature. Kipling, Hardy, Eliot, Graves and Riding had all contributed to it, but the Audenesque was unique.

Precisely where his strength lay remained to be seen. And it is obvious now that the poet's mimetic gift, ear for language and range of imagination had less to do with his survival than the depth at which he felt, and sometimes took hold of, the question posed in *The Wasteland*: What shall we do tomorrow? What shall we ever do? It was conscience, thoroughly disguised, that kept nagging the mercurial prodigy toward a lucid and responsible poetry. It would be foolish to think of any of his early images as much more programmatic than any other, but I find a few that seem so in the light of his later work. In the poem called *January 1, 1931*, for instance,

> *in cold Europe, in the middle of Autumn destruction,*
> *Maverick stood, his face grown lined with wincing*
> *In front of ignorance—"Tell the English," he shivered,*
> *"Man is a spirit."*

This is information that poetry, shivering, sometimes conveys; it is even peculiarly the burden of the finest modern poetry. For ten years or so Auden busied his art with conveying almost everything else. No other writer of verse during this time took in so much of the scene; no other got around among the events and properties of common life, conscious and unconscious, with a style so surefooted and swift. No other made such use of his reading. All this, as I've suggested, was a godsend to literature; but it came short of the first order. One remembered a style, not any serious poem in particular. The design, the bright idea, was always prevailing over the truth of feeling. If the message intended for the English were ever to be delivered without equivocation—as perception, and not as a joke, a portent, or a clever discourse—the poet had to identify himself more closely with his own daemon, not merely to employ or be employed by it.

Now this, or something like this, is what I think he has been tending to do in the years since his conversion. The belief that Auden embraced transfigures life and entails a reorientation toward the question of what we shall do tomorrow, or ever do. The onset of the experience can be quite shocking. This was put discursively with some force in the "Christmas Oratorio" (*For the Time Being*, 1941):

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It's as if
We had left our house for five minutes to mail a letter,
And during that time the living room had changed places
With the room behind the mirror over the fireplace . . .
. . . the world of space where events reoccur is still there,
Only now it's no longer real; the real one is nowhere
Where time never moves and nothing can ever happen:
I mean that although there's a person we know all about
Still bearing our name and loving himself as before,
That person has become a fiction; our true existence
Is decided by no one and has no importance to love.
That is why we despair; that is why we would welcome
The nursery bogey or the winecellar ghost, why even
The violent howling of winter and war has become
Like a jukebox tune that we dare not stop. We are afraid
Of pain but more afraid of silence; for no nightmare
Of hostile objects could be as terrible as this Void.
This is the Abomination. This is the wrath of God.

If this is a correct transcription—and allowing for the rhetorical purpose I assume that it is—such a crisis may awaken a realization of what the scholastics called the active intellect, "more distant than stars and nearer than the eye," as the spirit of the human person. One of Auden's Wise Men spoke with metaphysical desperation of the twinkling quarry:

. . . who knows if it is by design or pure inadvertence
That the Present destroys its inherited self-importance?
With envy, error, rage, regret,
We anticipate or remember but never are.
To discover how to be living now
Is the reason I follow this star.

And a speech of Simeon gave the significance for the poet:

Because in Him the Flesh is united to the Word without magical transformation, Imagination is redeemed from promiscuous fornication with her own images. . . .

The virtue of the "Christmas Oratorio," in which Auden thus played on the meaning of the Nativity in history, was in occasional passages of the kind I have quoted. It was not, as Eliot's unforgettable *Journey of the Magi* was, a set of "objective correlatives" for the emotion of epiphany. Its verse was less beautifully turned than that of *The Sea and the Mirror,* Auden's other long work of this period. It had no more structural tension than the title indicated. Its tone and taste were uncertain. But it left no doubt that the writer was entitled to his subject.

The redeemed imagination may well discover itself attracting seven devils

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for every one that it entertained before, and becoming a Christian poet can scarcely be any less difficult than becoming a Christian. Naturally the poet "runs howling to his art." In *The Age of Anxiety*, published in 1947, Auden expended a great deal of ingenuity on his nine-syllable alliterative meter with systematic elisions, on the order of those in Binyon's translation of Dante (an instance of the use to which he puts his reading). In the general opinion, he overdid it. The poem was called "A Baroque Eclogue," and baroque was no word for it. But there were other and more interesting things about that poem, among them the fact that the love of man and woman came in for a kind of rendering new in Auden's work, and the fact that the Surrealist dream-bogeys swarming through his Somatic Landscape were not altogether gratuitous; some at least represented what, if this man is a spirit, he has had most intimately to contend with.

Now in *Nones*, the poems of the last four years, it seems to me that it is possible at times, at last, to hear a sincere man speaking as a spirit self-known might speak, in an idiom which past resources have gone to refine and to make dance, so that one listens as to Horatian or Mozartian casualness in motion. It is only a heightening of certain qualities, an inch gained; but it seems a decisive inch. I think I can illustrate it with a few lines from the first poem in the book, a poem of waking up:

As, in complete obedience
To the light's laconic outcry, next
As a sheet, near as a wall,
Out there as a mountain's poise of stone,
The world is present, about,
And I know that I am, here, not alone
But with a world, and rejoice
Unvexed, for the will has still to claim
This adjacent arm as my own. . . .

In this passage the "mountain's poise of stone," and later in the poem "The eager ridge, the steady sea," are phrasings that show an advanced and austere sensitivity to reality-in-language. The metrical feat, as usual, is there, but it is not obtrusive (there are eighteen rhyming syllables in the nine lines quoted); one witnesses the view and not the frame.

It is significant, for a poet of landscape, that the view framed in these poems is by turns American and Mediterranean, and that the form of Auden's poem to Ischia, an especially graceful one, recalls the Alcaics of Horace. Among the Italian journeys of the English poets his must be considered as important as any, for reasons very different from any before, having been undertaken in maturity by a writer whose work was already becoming classic and Catholic. It is evident at least that his true Penelope was a more universal one than Mauberley's. In this book, gay as it is with a diversity of moods and forms, historical and moral insights are held in focus by a spirit more than rhetorically, better than desperately, Christian.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

II

It is easy to respond to the five portable volumes of *Poets of the English Language* with a ripple of perverse regret—regret that we are no longer left to make our own anthologies out of our own discoveries. We do not want handy books in boxes, expertly prepared; we want grimy books from the library or stained and cumbrous volumes whose leather bindings are rubbing off in brown dust. Once stated, this sentiment may be referred to the era where it apparently belongs and the great interest and value of Auden and Pearson's little set of books gladly acknowledged. Prejudice could scarcely survive the introduction to the first volume.

Here, with no words wasted, Auden brings to bear his technical authority in a primer of English prosody (who else could have given as two illustrations of the same accentual metre St. Thomas's *Nobis natus, nobis datus, ex intacta virgine,* and Betjeman's *Lonely in the Regent Palace, sipping a banana blush?*) and his historical sense in a discussion of the medieval period from Langland to Spenser, finishing off "The Renaissance" as something from which to date English poetry or anything else. The introductions to the other volumes are likewise incisive and marked by the poet's quite lofty sense of the terrain of the past. Auden's history seems always a little too obedient to epigram and diagram, vectored mathematically in accordance with forces that he formulates with an aquiline swoop; but these essays contain serious and sound insights.

To give one random example: neither literary judgment alone, without the support of an eschatology, nor both in combination without personal clairvoyance, could state as Auden does the Augustan contribution to English poetry, and the significance of its masterpiece. "*The Dunciad* is not only a great poem but also the only poem in English which is at once comic and sublime. . . . To have seen Dullness, the goddess of minor and in themselves unimportant figures, as a really formidable and eternal threat to the City of Man was a vision in its own way as original and of as permanent value to the City as Dante's of Paradise or Wordsworth's of Nature."

Though the introductions are certainly Auden's, the general work of planning, selection and arrangement seems to have been collaborative, and it is superb. In five volumes of more than 600 pages each the editors have intended, as they say, a "presentation of our tradition"; Langland to Spenser, Marlowe to Marvell, Milton to Goldsmith, Blake to Poe, Tennyson to Yeats. They have adopted a device used in Auden's *Portable Greek Reader,* including in each volume a chronological table, in which, in parallel columns, historical events and publications appear alongside important works of poetry. Among their selections they have been able to print plays—*Everyman, Antony and Cleopatra, Samson Agonistes*—a number of long poems in their entirety, and many more sections of long poems.

Thereby they correct the impression left by the usual one volume anthology (I am thinking of the Oxford Book) that English poetry has been chiefly lyric. The tradition is so represented as to make clear its enormous variety, and the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

foreshadowing of almost all styles in earlier ones. The editors point out, for example, how the irregular comic verse of Swift anticipates Ogden Nash; they make clear by their selections how the regular light verse of Praed anticipated one of Auden's favorite modes. (The degree, in fact, to which Auden has drawn on his inheritance could not have been demonstrated better than by these volumes). American poetry of the 19th Century is represented not only by Dickinson, Poe and Whitman but with almost equal emphasis and justice by Whittier, Thoreau, Melville, Lanier, Longfellow, Holmes and Lowell.

Very few of us indeed can go through such a compilation without having now and again a new experience of poetry. As it happened, I had never read, among other things, *The Hunting of the Snark,* nor Hood's *Ode to Autumn*—as beautiful as Keats'—nor Moore's nearly absolute song, *I Wish I Were by that Dim Lake,* nor the extraordinary lines by Christopher Smart to his cat Jeoffry. To come upon such things for the first time in ordinary reading would be pleasure enough, but I believe it is a pleasure of a different and more friendly kind to find them surrounded by so many sorts of excellence.

DANIEL AARON

Directives For Salvation[1]

IT MAY BE TOO SOON TO GENERALIZE about the anti-Communist novels which have appeared with increasing frequency during the last decade, but a stereotype seems to be emerging; in it one may reasonably expect to find all or many of the following characters:

1. the tough old Bolshevik whose vision of the socialist state has become counter-revolutionary and who is marked for liquidation,

2. the rising lickspits and party functionaries, coldly planning the disposal of the old fighters while patronizing them,

3. the cynical old noblemen, men who have treasured the past without becoming enslaved to tradition, disgusted alike by their own degenerate class and by the apostles of the new order,

4. the methodical, unimaginative, and ruthlessly efficient deputies of the Leader,

5. the women complements of the men, ranging from the wise and decent

[1]THE AGE OF LONGING, by *Arthur Koestler.* Macmillan. $3.50. THE BURNED BRAMBLE, *by Manès Sperber.* Doubleday. $3.95. THE CASE OF COMRADE TULAYEV, by *Victor Serge.* Doubleday. $3.00. FROM HERE TO ETERNITY, by *James Jones.* Scribners. $4.50. THE PLACE OF THE LION, by *Charles Williams.* Pellegrini & Cudahy. $3.00. DARKNESS AND DAY, by *I. Compton-Burnett.* Knopf. $3.50. CONJUGAL LOVE, by *Alberto Moravia.* Farrar, Straus. $2.50.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

companions of the old revolutionaries and the bitter bourgeoise wives of the workers to the whores of the opportunists,

6. and finally the Leader himself, who appears in various guises: the genial villain, the frightened despot, or the impassive idol of the Asiatic hordes.

The formula is elastic (for instance, there may or may not be the ex-communist intellectual or the seeker in quest of a faith) but certain uniformities persist. We are in a world of cafés and offices and prisons where people talk endlessly and hopelessly, where freedom of action is illusory at best, and men are victimized by others or by themselves.

How effective this formula can become depends upon the practitioner. In the hands of Arthur Koestler, whose *Darkness at Noon* helped to establish the pattern, it has degenerated into something thin and glossy. *The Age of Longing* has a serious theme, the impotence and sickness of a people who have no faith and who unconsciously yearn for authority they outwardly deprecate, but it somehow remains unserious. Koestler's milieu (a moribund France propped up by a debauched America) is almost incidental. It has no more reality than the carefully made-up actors who speak the witty, often brilliant lines he has provided for them, and the effectiveness of Koestler's thesis is considerably weakened by his compulsive cleverness. He is not content to construct a portentous allegory with an excessively heavy moral burden but must embellish the action with all manner of weighty and sarcastic asides, fiddling while Rome burns.

The pseudo-scientific theorizing noticeable in Koestler's previous books now pervades his writing, and the natural and physical sciences are ransacked for dubious social analogies. Thus he likes to speak of "the inflamed prostate of Europe—the twitching face of the Occident between two strokes," or refer to the sclerosis of a civilization suffering from "high blood pressure and the hardening of the collective glands." He is fond of phrases like "the political instinct-life of a people," or "faith encymes," and has compounded a jargon of physiology and psychology that tells us much more about the author than it does about the dehumanized and mechanistic world he is trying to interpret.

Just what is he really saying? The reader will discover that Koestler dislikes Communists and fellow-travellers and existentialists (there is a cruel and rather cheap attack against the "intellectual masturbation" of the "neo-nihilists"); that Europe is being crushed, to paraphrase one of his characters, between *Pravda* and the juke box. He hates the "Neanderthals" from the East, but he despises the decaying West and the recognizable men and women ("the characters in this book are fictitious") who glimmer through his caricatures. Once more he speaks of "fearless suffering" and banks his hopes on the "knights in rusty armor" or the "mangy lone wolves" fated to live in scattered oases during the long totalitarian night slowly but irrevocably descending. All of this he has stated before, but *The Age of Longing* is more than a recapitulation of his past works; despite its aggressive timeliness, it marks his farthest retreat from reality. What Koestler is actually concerned with is himself, and in this, his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

most personal of books, Europe and its problems are subordinated to piques and fancies disturbingly sadistic.

On the surface, Manès Sperber's novel of the German communist movement before and after the rise of Hitler follows the Koestlerian or anti-Communist formula. Here, too, the familiar cast reappears, almost character for character, and the long conversations about means and ends, history, conservatism, the Marxist dialectic, and revolution have a kind of inevitability. But although both Koestler's and Sperber's novels are drowned in talk, the latter is more direct than Koestler and incidentally more penetrating, because he never permits his own personality to blur and distort the life he is writing about. To be sure he has the advantage of describing what has already occurred, whereas Koestler is projecting the near future, but Sperber, though sometimes drawn to the melodramatic and the sensational, is never flashy, and he has obviously a greater sympathy for his dupes and heroes.

The Burned Bramble, a document of the Communist betrayal from the German side, corroborates in fiction what has already been revealed in the memoirs of German ex-Communists. Sperber shows the German comrades following the involutions of party strategy, cooperating with the Nazis when it seems expedient, selling out their own recalcitrant or obsolescent personnel when the occasion demands. The leaders of the German movement, named after the seasons of the year, have submerged themselves in a cause and have become estranged from themselves in the process. One of Sperber's old revolutionaries, waiting for death in a Soviet prison, speaks aloud to himself the letters he is not permitted to write, and sends mental messages to his younger comrade, Doino. He tells him that he must rehabilitate the cause for which he and his friends have died, else "I shall have squandered everything to no purpose. If our victory without victims, the first truly human victory in all history, cannot take place, if the Djugashvilis are inevitable, then, in that case, they are justified in destroying me, for they are right and I have been wrong all my life." In the end, Doino, the only one of the organizers who survives the Gestapo and the Moscow purges, recovers his identity and without belittling the accomplishments of his marytred comrades.

If the historian is to "avoid subjectivity," Sperber's old aristocrat remarks to his pupil, Doino, "he must look at contemporary events in the same way that he looks at historical ones. Most people have a megalomaniac, paranoiac attitude toward their own time. To be an historian, one must start by getting rid of such crazy illusions." The novelist need not write of historical events with the detachment of the historian, but he, too, ought to give the impression, at least, of distance and serenity no matter how appalling his theme. Victor Serge, whose novel *The Case of Comrade Tulayev,* makes up the third in our anti-Communist trilogy, manages to do so even though his is the most terrifying story of all. Serge's book is no Orwellian nightmare, no existentialist tract, no exposé of Soviet bestiality. It is at once more realistic and more symbolic, more fearful and yet free of that personal hysteria so frequently injected into the now-it-can-be-told school of fiction.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

When Comrade Tulayev is shot down on a Moscow street one wintry night, a chain of action is started that does not end until thousands of people are disgraced, imprisoned, and killed. The fact that the unknown murderer, a minor office worker employed in a subway construction yard, acted upon an impulse makes the holocaust all the more inexorable. Planned or unplanned, the assassination symbolizes an untamed resistance that must be stamped out. "You must see, nevertheless," one of the guiltless accused is told, "that the Party cannot admit that it is impotent before a revolver shot fired from no one knows where, perhaps from the depths of the people's soul." Some one must suffer; and the rest of the novel is concerned with the details of a giant roundup of expendable officials, discredited party-members, old revolutionaries, and suspected Trotskyists who must undergo the ritual sacrifice.

Serge is able to reproduce with more fidelity and insight than either Koestler or Sperber the new bureaucratic creatures who have flourished since the days of the revolution. In order to survive they have developed a new set of instincts which tells them whom to cultivate and whom to shun even before the charges of espionage or "wrecking" have been officially revealed. He writes of men "relieved" of their positions, sent away on vacations, and then hustled off trains into limousines waiting on quiet roads. He can describe the progress of an open envelope as it moves from office to office bearing the incriminating information that spills out long before the "Fascist criminal" has been formally notified. He knows the unlimited possibilities of human degradation: the freezing jail, the vermin, and the bullet behind the neck.

But Serge does not dwell upon these horrors for their own sake. What keeps his book sane is his awareness that we are still living in a world of time, that his bleak age is an episode in history with limits and dimensions. Moreover, although he draws a bitter picture of totalitarian living, he feels a certain compassion for the oppressors as well as for the oppressed. He is more receptive than Koestler or George Orwell to the unkillable qualities of men that persistently emerge from the slag-heaps and prisons, and he celebrates these qualities in the old Bolsheviks who kept their early faith until they took their last walks down the stone corridors.

It would seem to be an impossible stretch to connect this taut and well-constructed novel with James Jones's sprawling and, for the most part, insensitively written saga of an unreconstructed "Bolshevik" in an American army camp; but the analogy is plain enough. For *From Here to Eternity,* bulging and inchoate as it may be, is also a story of the bleak age, and it too deals with the crushing of oppositionists by a totalitarian bureaucracy. Strip away one half of the eight hundred and sixty eight pages, especially those sections dealing with the love-life and further adventures of Private Pruett's top sergeant; delete those passages in which the author recaptures the sentiments, situations, characters and prose rhythms of Wolfe, Steinbeck, Hemingway, and Dos Passos and something remains that is interesting and serious.

The valuable core of *From Here to Eternity* describes, in Jones's words, the "gradual wearing down of a man by the seas of organization," a theme either

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

implicit or explicit in the novels just discussed. Jones, a pugnacious anti-intellectual, writes from the point of view of a bookish "wobbly" with a tremendous rage. He is less despairing than angry and too immediately involved in his affair with the army to report his experiences with any real detachment or depth. When he observes closely what he has seen and heard (the gob of spit, the crap game in the latrine), he can produce that illusion of reality which results, as Henry James said, from the specificity of detail; but "sobald er reflectiert, ist er ein Kind."

Intentionally or not, Schofield Barracks—Territory of Hawaii—where the action occurs, resembles in some respects a not so well-run kolkhoze with the military elite behaving in the same authoritarian fashion as the Political Bureau. The officers do not have to meet grain quotas, but they must produce their quota of successful boxers for the company smokers and break the "dog faces" and non-coms who show the slightest indication of trying to buck the system. Jones's hero, a tough fighter and accomplished bugler, refuses to comply with the demands of his sports-minded captain (he had put aside his gloves for good after blinding a friend during a sparring match) and is systematically broken for his pains. He is the equivalent of the "old Bolshevik"; he tells himself:

> then I would say that politically you are a sort of super arch-revolutionary, the kind that made the Revolution in Russia and that the Communists are killing now, a sort of perfect criminal type, very dangerous, a mad dog that loves under dogs.

It is quite fitting that he should end up in the Stockade with some other truculent revolutionaries, authentic American anarchists with all the softness beaten out of them, and that he should assert his "self-ness," like Koestler's heroine or the undistinguished citizen-assassin of Comrade Tulayev—by murdering a sadistic M.P., the symbol of the spirit-crushing institution.

At bottom, Jones and Sperber and Koestler and Serge are saying with varying degrees of directness and skill that uniformity kills and difference saves, that no absolutist philosophy whether it be Communist or Catholic (Catholicism is explicitly rejected by them all) can ever make men free, and that survival, to paraphrase Koestler who speaks for the other three here, does not depend upon an "obscene craving for faith" but only upon open-eyed and fearless suffering.

This distaste for what George Orwell called "the smelly little orthodoxies" is not shared by Charles Williams, nor will one find the robust materialism of the anti-authoritarian novels in his orthodox shockers. His books serve as a kind of Christian if not Catholic reply to the secular-materialist position. The Catholic answer to the Orwell school (see Geoffrey Ashe's "Second Thoughts on 'Nineteen Eighty-Four,'" *The Month,* November, 1950) sees the triumph of the totalitarian state and its attendant cruelties as the logical culmination of a rationalistic progressivism freed from divine restraints. Orwell's "Old Thinkers" (and, we may add, Serge's Old Bolsheviks) are only experiencing what their theories necessitated. Socialism denies the soul and the instincts; socialism proclaims the infinite malleability of men; socialism sweeps away all metaphysics. And the result is Doublethink or the Party Line, the annihilation

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of history. Imperfect men make imperfect societies. Once this fact is grasped, the necessity of believing in a supernatural God, the need to accept the idea of individual responsibility and above all the possibility that men are free to make choices and decisions, become clear.

Such, as I understand it, is the framework of belief upon which Williams builds up his horror-parables of the soul, although he diverges from the Catholic interpretation in crucial respects. *The Place of the Lion,* a tale not of "the terror of Germany" but of "The Cocktail Party," opens in familiar Williams fashion with an escaped lioness in an English country lane, but it quickly turns into a disquisition on eschatology. The burden of Williams' fantasy is this: men and women are composed of soul-stuff into which has been mixed certain qualities or "Principles," attractive and unattractive. In animals, the mixture is less complete (lion-like qualities predominating in the lion); but when the lion-like trait predominates in a man (call it love for authority), the Principle materializes and claims its own. If we translate Serge's Russia, for instance, into Williams's country-side, the Lion is now in the ascendent with the Serpent (deceit, guile, envy), and "this" world is being absorbed into "that."

And what can save it? Man, by his own free choice, can evoke the Eagle (symbol of self-understanding and the knowledge of all the Principles), and can will his own salvation because he can express a preference for it. The extent to which one can "be" or "exist," the extent to which one can indeed be *free* will depend upon one's making the correct choice. If man can subordinate his ruling passions through love and through sacrifice, then he can achieve the state for which he was intended: the balance and pattern of all ideas. Unrestricted capitulation to any single theory is tantamount to an obscene and unchristian self-love, a kind of moral cannibalism. The peace of mind impossible to attain in the fractured worlds of Orwell and Koestler is finally reached by the Williams injunction of "loving others, or seeking to love others."

This transcendental drama, the principal roles of which are played by upper class English men and women unembarrassed by the problems of brute survival, will be especially savored by those readers who accept Williams' explanation of the human crisis. For those who prefer an England less densely crowded with spirits, an a-moral England where servants in the kitchen discuss the incestuous relation of their employers with sympathy, and preternatural children speak with fearful candor, Ivy Compton-Burnett's *Darkness and Day* will prove more congenial. Miss Compton-Burnett's newest novel bears no relation to Koestler's *Darkness at Noon* and even less to *The Place of the Lion.* She preaches a different kind of salvation and repudiates utterly the doctrine of living for others. If you have done so, she seems to be saying, your life has been wasted. "People do not want other people's lives," one of her characters remarks. "They think too little of them in comparison with their own." And as for self-understanding and the obligation to plumb the recesses of the heart, it is better to avert one's eyes: "There is no point in being dragged down too far." Perhaps under her Jane Austen disguise, Miss Compton-Burnett is an obsolete and dangerous bourgeoise-secularist out of sympathy with any solution requiring individual

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

effacement and "longing" for nothing better than the pleasure of living and a little decent civility. A serene naturalist with a tender regard for the flesh, she can welcome, as the authoritarian cannot, the inconveniences of singularity and the disorderliness of variety. And she understands and condones the appetites:

> "You cannot eat your cake and have it."
> "That is a mean saying. You could if you had enough cake. It is sad that it has become established. It throws a dark light on human nature."

The characters in her private society are as implausible as they are uninhibited, but they nevertheless become very much alive as they talk to one another, and more real or multi-dimensional than many of the suffering and voluble creatures in the novels discussed above. Moreover, they have arrived at an understanding of themselves without the aid of crisis, conflict, or catastrophe. Since they were born wise, they require no illumination, and their predicaments are not accompanied by visions.

Like Miss Compton-Burnett, Alberto Moravia is deaf to the demands of earthly and heavenly authority, at least in *Conjugal Love,* and deferential only to instinct. He also writes of people out of time, whose difficulties are personal.

Conjugal Love is a severely classical sketch of a man's discovery of himself after a deep humiliation, a humiliation neither political nor religious. Silvio Baldeschi, a dilettante critic and self-satisfied husband, attributes his failure to do creative work under the most ideal of conditions to the demands of love, and renounces his conjugal duties until he has finished his masterpiece. He completes the book at precisely the moment when his strongly sexed wife, Leda, is giving herself to Zeus, this time in the guise of a bald-headed barber for whom she has previously expressed the most intense revulsion. Silvio, who witnesses his wife's seduction (a wild and primitive dance on the threshing floor of a deserted mill), suffers as Gabriel Conroy suffers in Joyce's much profounder story, "The Dead." He also sees himself as "a well-meaning sentimentalist" and "a pitiable fatuous fellow," but Moravia is only partly concerned with the disintegration of an ego. *Conjugal Love,* like some of E. M. Forster's stories, exposes the sterility of reason and taste and implicitly asserts the vitality of vulgarity. The fact that this carnal message should be presented so elegantly accentuates the contrast between its meaning and form, but the medieval fabliau, comic and rank, cannot be refined away. The deluded cuckold and his beautiful wife is an old story. Resuscitated by Moravia and re-written with Lawrentian overtones, it speaks without pretentiousness of men's kinship with the earth and of the perils of introspection.

Conjugal Love is not a great or an extraordinary book, but it demonstrates once more how the artist can achieve a poetic reality without being topical or enmeshing himself in contemporary issues. Silvio Baldeschi's self-revelation—"the acute sense of a sudden crumbling to pieces, of a headlong plunge into absurdity and emptiness"—is presented by Moravia as a victory, without divine assistance, of the artistic consciousness over the subterfuges of the self.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED